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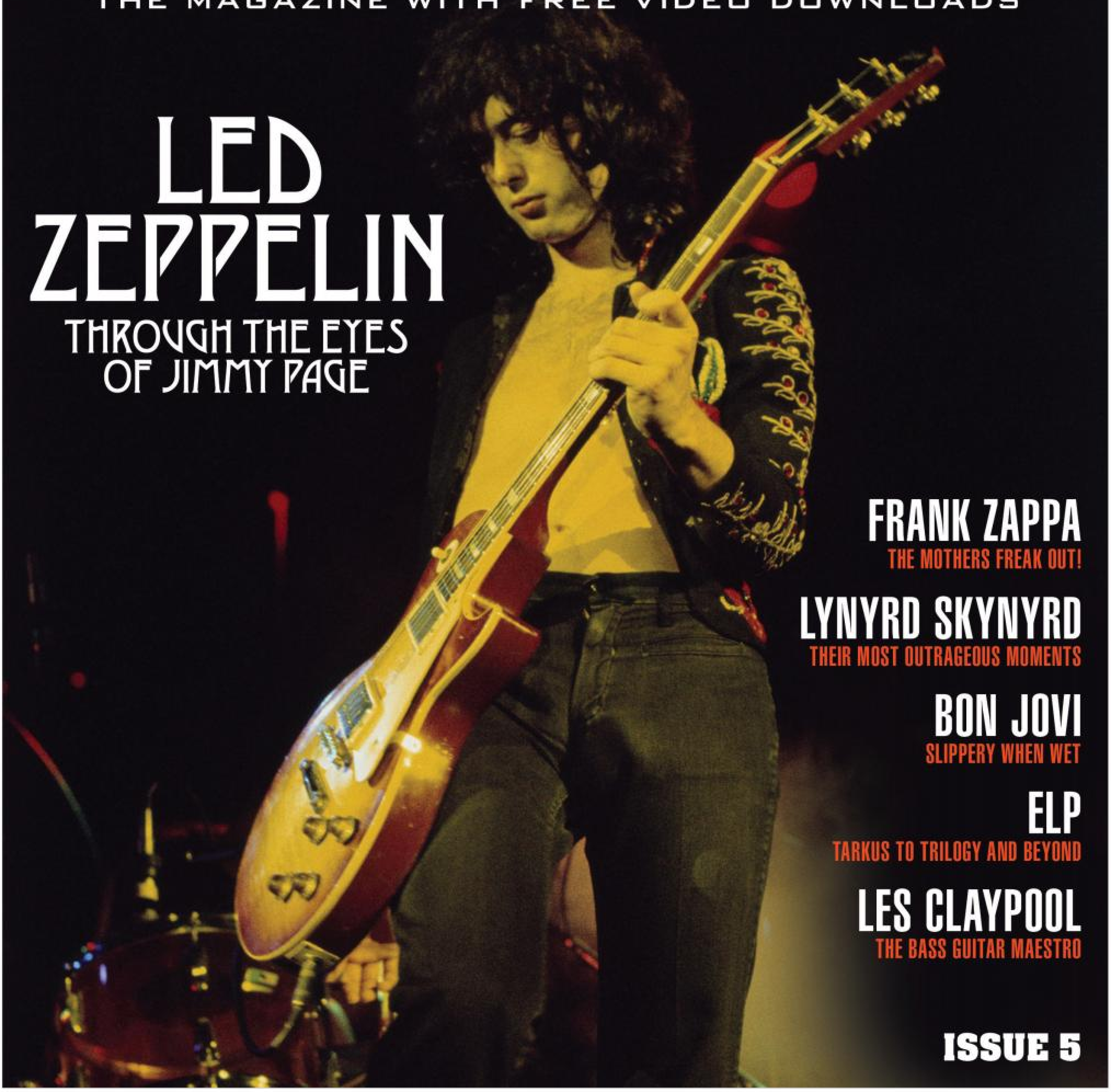

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THROUGH THE EYES OF JIMMY PAGE

FRANK ZAPPA
THE MOTHERS FREAK OUT!

LYNYRD SKYNYRD
THEIR MOST OUTRAGEOUS MOMENTS

BON JOVI
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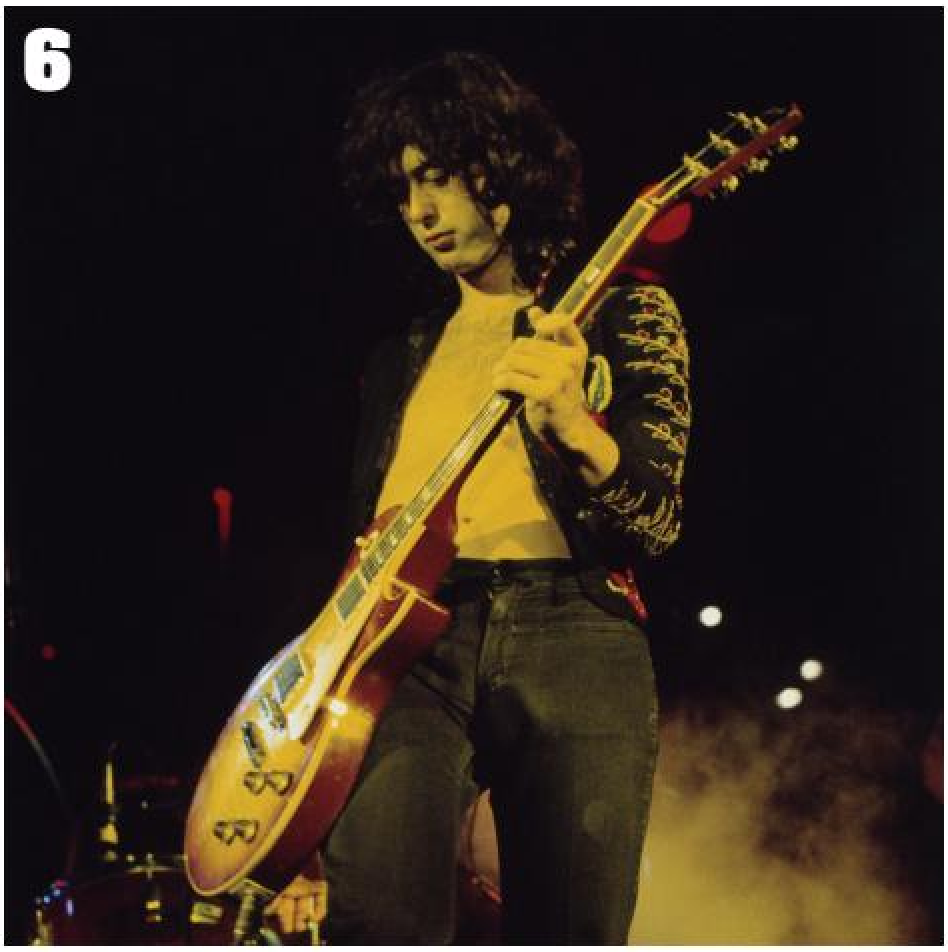

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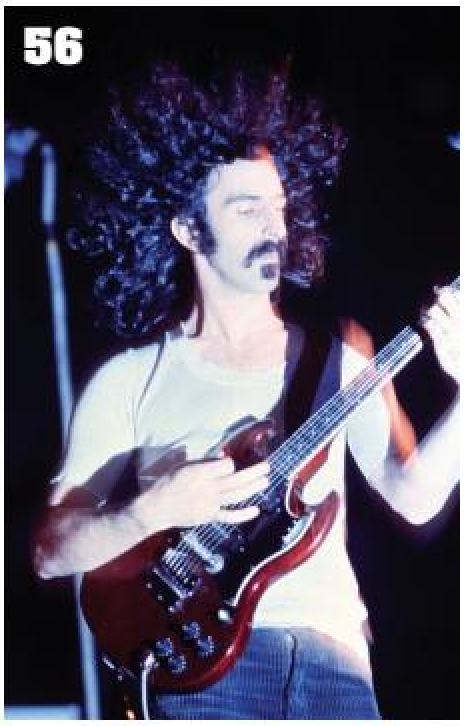

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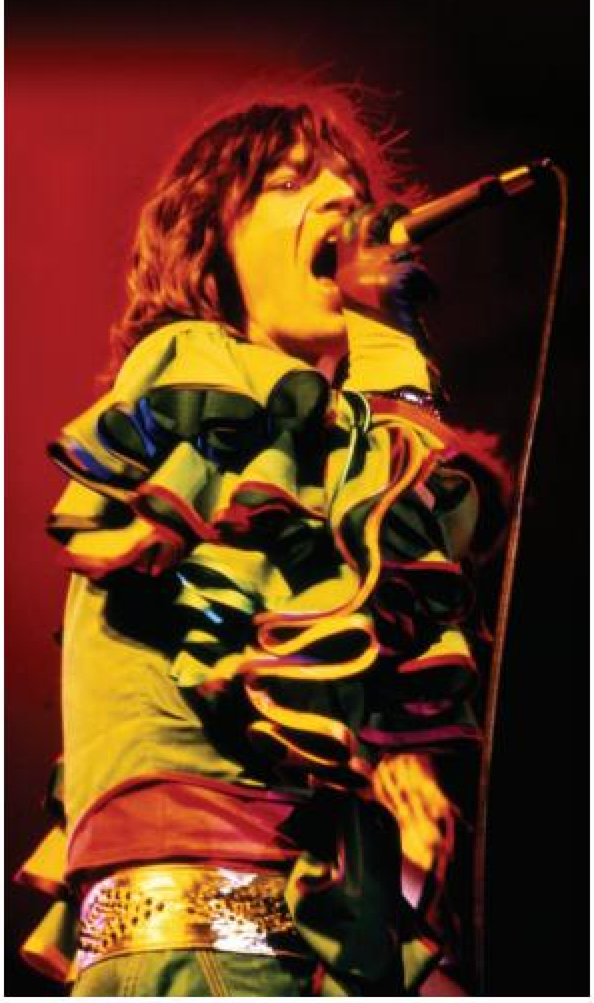

Editor's Welcome

Welcome to Music Legends the interactive magazine for music lovers. Music Legends brings the magic of the digital age to the world of music magazines.

Just as the title suggests, Music Legends showcases a great range of articles featuring new insights into the biggest names in the history of rock music. Sure, the music is powerful, but so too are the tales of the darker underside of fame and fortune; the booze, the fights, artistic differences, the drugs, the splits, the lawsuits, the politics and so much more. With Music Legends there is a whole new digital dimension for you to enjoy. Today, the modern reader is no longer limited to simply what can be conveyed on the printed page, so check out what treats are on offer inside this issue below.

Led Zeppelin – In Their Own Words Audiobook

Music Legends is proud to present this exciting reader promotion – in conjunction with Coda Records we are offering a free covermount CD to celebrate our cover stars – the legendary Led Zeppelin.

This issue's featured CD tells the inside story of Led Zeppelin during the halcyon years of the band from 1968 to 1972. Featured here are the events and recordings that shaped Led Zeppelin, as told by the band members themselves. As well as insights into the moments that were crucial in the creation of their legendary early albums. This powerful CD also includes a masterful deconstruction of the musical elements of *Stairway to Heaven* by Jimmy Page.

Keep your eyes peeled for exclusive free CDs on forthcoming issues, and if you love this month's offering then why not send us a snap or a short review to be featured in the next issue.

The Music Legends YouTube Channel

Our dedicated Music Legends YouTube channel brings you free access to fantastic concert films and exclusive documentaries.

In conjunction with Coda Publishing Ltd we are proud to present exclusive performance footage from the music icons featured in Music Legends magazine, as well as documentaries featuring the leading music critics, studio personnel, insiders, band members and the artists themselves. These free videos complement and expand upon the articles in Music Legends to provide an extra dimension to your reading experience. To access this exclusive content simply visit our YouTube channel at mlmag.uk/youtube and subscribe today to never miss an episode.

Look out for the 'Do You Want Some More ...?' graphic at the end of the articles and simply scan the QR code to be taken directly to an exclusive documentary film about the featured band or artist.

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H. Carruthers

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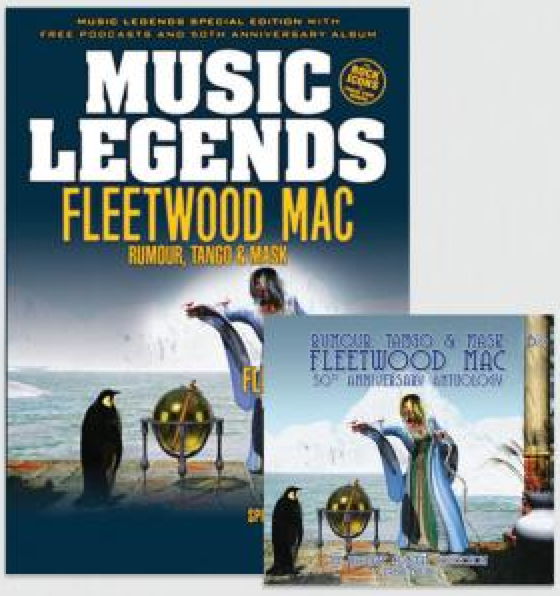
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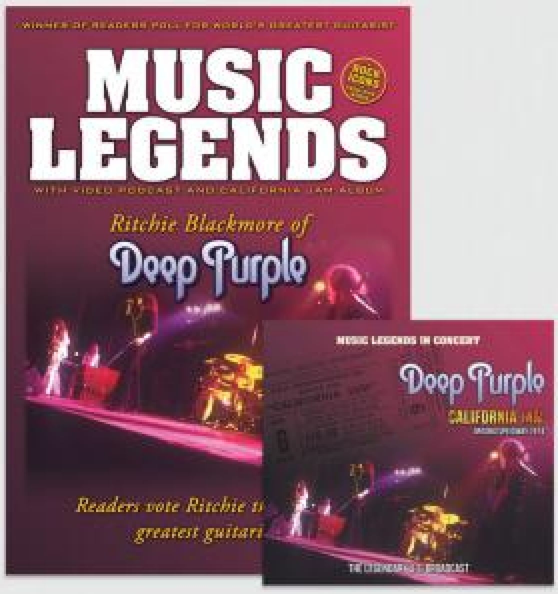
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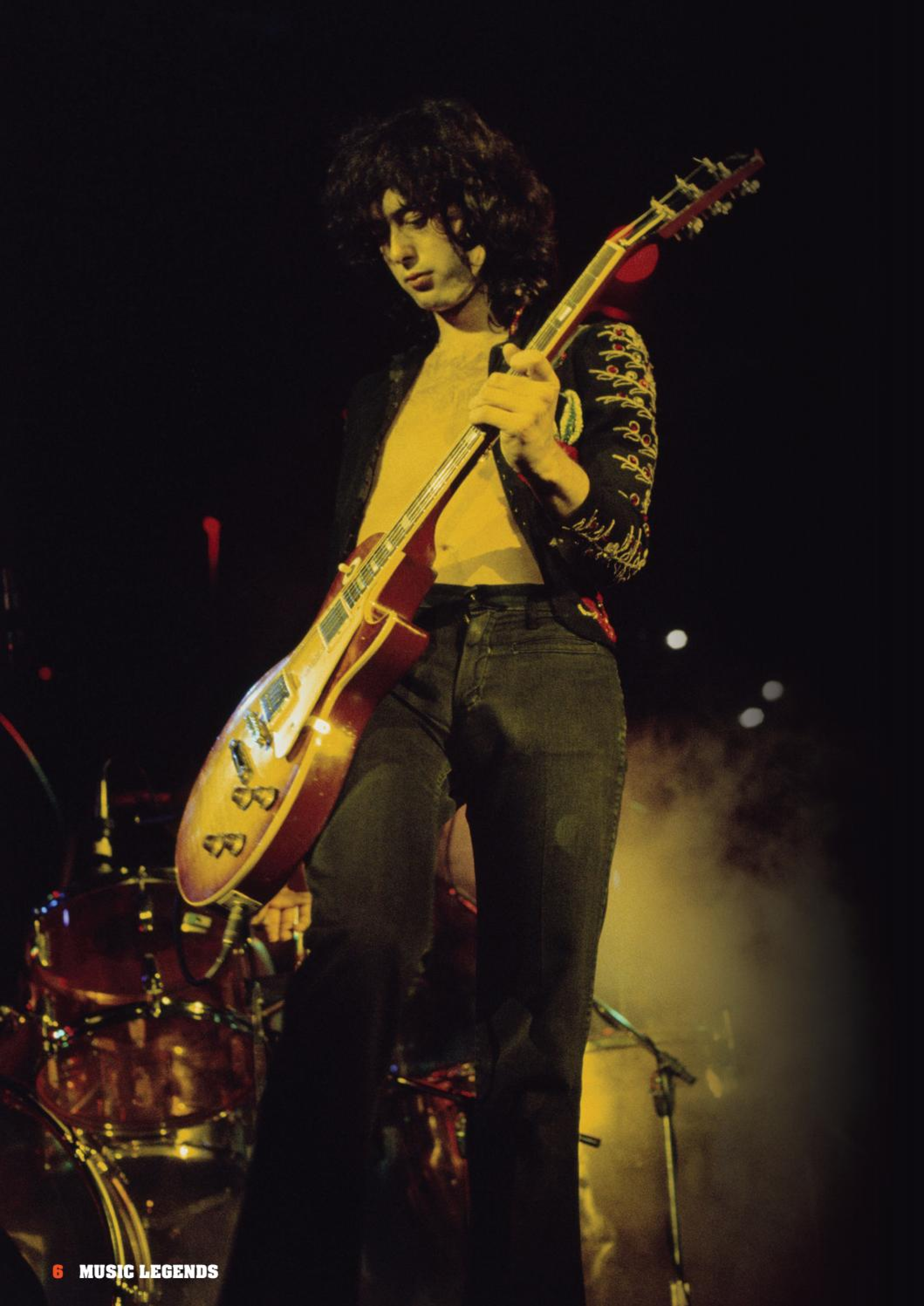

LED ZEPPELIN

THROUGH THE EYES OF JIMMY PAGE

Led Zeppelin are universally heralded as one of the greatest rock bands of all time. They epitomised the rock 'n' roll culture of the early seventies and have inspired generations of musicians. Led Zeppelin were launched into the annals of history by their iconic series of albums *I*, *II*, *III* and *IV*, and have remained there with an unrivalled legacy ever since. In this article we hear how these classic albums were inspired and created in the words of the band's legendary guitarist and founder Jimmy Page.

In 1968 the New Yardbirds settled on a fresh new name and the rock juggernaut we all know and love as Led Zeppelin was officially born. Despite being one of the best-known names in rock music these days, the Led Zeppelin name had originally been conceived for an abandoned Jeff Beck/Jimmy Page super group in 1966.

'We were going to form a group called Led Zeppelin at the time of the *Beck's Bolero* sessions, with the line-up from that session. It was going to be me and Beck on guitars, Moon on drums, maybe Nicky Hopkins on piano. The only one from the session who wasn't going to be in it was Jonesy, who had played bass. Instead, Moon suggested we bring in Entwistle as bassist and lead singer as well. Keith Moon himself had come up with the name during the 1966 sessions which he'd coined from John Entwistle's term for a bad gig, which he sometimes described as "going over like a lead zeppelin".'

With their new moniker firmly in place, the band went into immediate rehearsals, with Plant and Page in particular hitting it off with their shared musical passions.

'I knew exactly the style I was after and the sort of musicians I wanted to play with, the sort of powerhouse sound I was really going for. I guess it proves that the group was really meant to be, the way it all came together. And I was so lucky to find everybody so instantly, without making massive searches and doing numerous auditions that you hear about to fill the gaps.

> 'Keith Moon had come up with the name during the 1966 sessions which he'd coined from John Entwistle's term for a bad gig, which he sometimes described as "going over like a lead zeppelin".'
>
> JIMMY PAGE

'Nobody had heard of Robert or Bonzo really. Robert had been around for a long time, making records, he was in contact and involved with big name managers – in fact he really had quite a lot of opportunities to make it before Zeppelin. It's quite remarkable that he didn't. It's strange the way it happens. I really think at times that our group was meant to be.'

Led Zeppelin released their self-titled debut album in January 1969. The album was made in record time by modern standards.

'It comes out to thirty-six hours – I know that because I had to pay the bills! Of course, it wasn't like we went into there for thirty-six hours non-stop, but we paid for thirty-six hours of studio time. We had a chance to air the songs onstage in a small tour of Scandinavia. It gave us a chance to know the numbers before going in the studio. John Paul Jones and I were veterans in the studio so we had all the discipline. John Bonham and Robert had been in the studio before for a couple of things. It wasn't like anyone was going in there for the first time. In any case, everyone got swept away by the energy of it.

'It came together really quick. It was cut very shortly after the band was formed. Our only rehearsal was a two-week tour of Scandinavia that we did

Led Zeppelin in 1968. Clockwise from the top: guitarist Jimmy Page, drummer John Bonham, bassist/keyboardist John Paul Jones and vocalist Robert Plant.

> 'As a musician I think my greatest achievement has been to create unexpected melodies and harmonies within a rock and roll framework. And as a producer I would like to be remembered as someone who was able to sustain a band of unquestionable individual talent, and push it to the forefront during its working career.'
> – Jimmy Page

as the New Yardbirds. For material, we obviously went right down to our blues roots. I still had plenty of Yardbirds riffs left over. By the time Jeff Beck did go, it was up to me to come up with a lot of new stuff. It was this thing where Clapton set a heavy precedent in the Yardbirds, which Beck had to follow. Then it was even harder for me, in a way, because the second lead guitarist had suddenly become the first. And I was under pressure to come up with my own riffs. On the first LP I was still heavily influenced by the earlier days. I think it tells a bit, too. The album was made in three weeks. It was obvious that somebody had to take the lead, otherwise we'd have all sat around jamming and doing nothing for six months.'

Led Zeppelin showcased music of outstanding freshness, rich in dynamic texture and undeniable passion. That's not to say there weren't some genuine issues concerning the originality of the sources, particularly with Jeff Beck exploring some very similar territory. *Dazed and Confused*, originally by Jake Holmes, was altered by Led Zeppelin and claimed as their own. It was another standout track on their debut album and one that became a central feature of their live shows, thanks to its possibilities for extended improvisation. There was also some crossover from the Yardbirds, which was a source of some embarrassment for Page.

'You've got to understand that Beck and I came from the same sort of roots. If you've got things you enjoy, then you want to do them – to the horrifying point where we'd done our first LP with *You Shook Me*, and then I heard he'd done *You Shook Me* on *Truth*. I was terrified because I thought they'd be the same. But I hadn't even known he'd done it, and he hadn't known that we had. Obviously I'd pioneered a lot of ideas with the Yardbirds, even though they hadn't been widely heard because of the recording situation, and it was a chance to take those ideas further on. It was inevitable that the first LP had leftover ideas from the Yardbirds because that's what I'd been working on. It was original stuff that I'd developed myself.'

There were a number of studio tricks on display which demonstrated Page's considerable expertise as a highly aware producer, who from long experience knew exactly the effects he wanted to achieve: for example the famous guitar sound on *Communication Breakdown* has its own distinctive quality.

'I put the guitar amp in a small room, a little tiny vocal booth-type thing and recorded from a distance. You see there's a very old recording maxim that goes, "Distance makes depth". I've used that a hell of a lot on recording techniques with the band generally, not just me. Before that the fashion was for close up microphones on the amps. It was a case of just putting the microphone in front, but I'd have a microphone right out the back as well, and then balance the two, and get rid of all the phasing problems. Really, you shouldn't have to use an EQ in the studio if the instruments sound right. It should all be done with the microphones. But everybody has gotten so carried away with the EQ pots that they have forgotten the whole science of microphone placement. There aren't too many guys who know it. I'm sure Les Paul knows a lot; obviously he must have been well into that, well into it. As were all those who produced the early rock records where there were only one or two microphones available in the studio.'

> 'I knew exactly the style I was after and the sort of musicians I wanted to play with, the sort of powerhouse sound I was really going for. I guess it proves that the group was really meant to be, the way it all came together.'
>
> JIMMY PAGE

The amazing guitar solo on *I Can't Quit You Baby* is another example of the inventiveness at the heart of this superb studio work. To this day Page is still proud of this despite a few rough edges.

'There are mistakes in it, but it doesn't make any difference. I'll always leave the mistakes in. I can't help it. The timing bits on the A and the B-flat parts are right, though it might sound wrong. The timing just sounds off. But there are some wrong notes. You've got to be reasonably honest about it.'

The other hallmark of the album was the advent of the guitar bow technique.

'When I was doing sessions I'd been playing with a violin bow across the strings, which I suppose I could say has become a bit of a trademark now, but that wasn't actually my idea. It was suggested to me by one of the violinists in the string section. It obviously looks a bit gimmicky because one hasn't seen it done before. As soon as you pick up a bow and start playing guitar with it that's the first thing people say "Oh, that's an interesting gimmick." But the fact is that it's very musical, it sounds like an orchestra at times, the cello section, violins … it's quite amazing! The only drawback of the technique is that the guitar has a flat neck as opposed to a violin's curved neck, which is a bit limiting.'

Despite their prowess in the studio, where Led Zeppelin really came alive was onstage. Their staggering sets often extended for hours and left audiences stunned. Yet Page has since asserted that Led Zeppelin played long concerts out of necessity, not ego.

'We need that amount of time to get everything across. You put on a support act and they're gonna want to do at least an hour – probably an hour-and-a-half – so that makes the whole show about five hours long, including gear changeovers. Some halls have to get everybody out by eleven, so where does that leave the headliner? We established a policy long ago that our concerts would feature only Zeppelin and the people would know exactly what they were coming to hear. Myself, I get fed up with hearing about groups who only do a fifty-minute show. It's not right. It all depends on how much a performer has got to say, I suppose, and Zeppelin has got quite a bit to put across … We've played every single market that there is to play in the last few years … apart from Bangkok and India, which we'll get to in the next year. There's no reason why, other than the fact that we just love to play. We love touring too much to give it up. We took a film crew on our last tour, you know. The movie'll be out soon and that one film will be the end-all story

Frontman Robert Plant onstage on 12 May 1970.

of why we have such a great time on the road.'

By September 1969 Led Zeppelin were enormous, focusing specifically on the US market had paid off and they were fast becoming one of the biggest bands in the world. Despite this the band had their detractors, and were criticised in some circles for coming up too fast. Their meteoric rise led certain critics and music fans to feel suspicious of Led Zeppelin, cautious not to be fed another media-generated pop act.

'Things have happened so quickly it is unbelievable. Our group will only have been formed a year this October and already some critics are giving us rave reports. It is impossible to convey just how big Zeppelin are now in the States, but if I tell you that our album sold 20,000 copies in three days last week and is still pounding along it might give you some idea. You can turn on the radio and hear a Zeppelin track played three or four times a day.

'For anyone to imply that Led Zeppelin were pre-fabricated or hyped-up on a gullible public is grossly unfair. You can't compute or calculate for a situation like that, or the chemistry that arises when you put together a band. The only people with a similar musical approach at the time were Cream, but I always felt their improvised passages used to go on and on. We tried to reflect more light and shade into the spontaneous pieces, and also a sense of the dramatic. If there was a key to why we made it, it was in that.'

A constant round of live work meant that in the first half of 1969 Led Zeppelin had no set time to write or rehearse. In consequence they were forced to write the new album on the road at sound checks and during snatched sessions in hotel rooms. The album was also recorded on the road, in seven separate countries, at a variety of studios in sessions squeezed into rest breaks along the way. Nonetheless a stunning album was somehow completed and released in October 1969. Despite its unorthodox creation *Led Zeppelin II* (as it was inevitably labelled, despite the fact that it bore no formal title) was a much faster seller than its predecessor. Topping the US charts for seven weeks, it also creatively outstripped Led Zeppelin's glittering debut.

Shortly after the completion of the album Page explained the convoluted recording process of *Led Zeppelin II*.

'It was recorded while the group was on the move, technological gypsies. No base, no home. All you could relate to was a new horizon and a suitcase. So there's a lot of movement and aggression. A lot of bad feeling towards being put in that situation. The album took such a long time to make; it was all on and off. It was quite insane really. We had no time and we had to write numbers in hotel rooms. By the time the album came out, I was really fed up with it. I'd just heard it so many times in so many places. I really think I lost confidence in it. Even though people were saying it was great, I wasn't convinced myself. We're playing more as a band than before though. Everybody's playing in such a way as to bring out everybody else. I'm really happy with it, and I'm not usually that optimistic about them, because I've lived every mistake over and over. There are so many things that have come out from those conditions of having to finish it in a certain time. I was amazed at the inventiveness, the fact that no overdubs were wasted … Just totally taking chances, experimentation, and they seemed to work. Everything seemed to be on our side, to flow out. There's a blues [solo] that's so held back. Seven minutes long and at no point does anyone blow out. That's one of the solos I thought I'd never get out. Everyone's been doing blues since 1964. "It's going to fall into clichés or it's going to be too jazzy", but everything worked OK. So things like that really encourage me. I do worry that the second album is turning out so different from the first. We may have overstepped the mark. But then again, I suppose there are enough Led Zeppelin trademarks in there. It's very hard rock, no doubt about that. There

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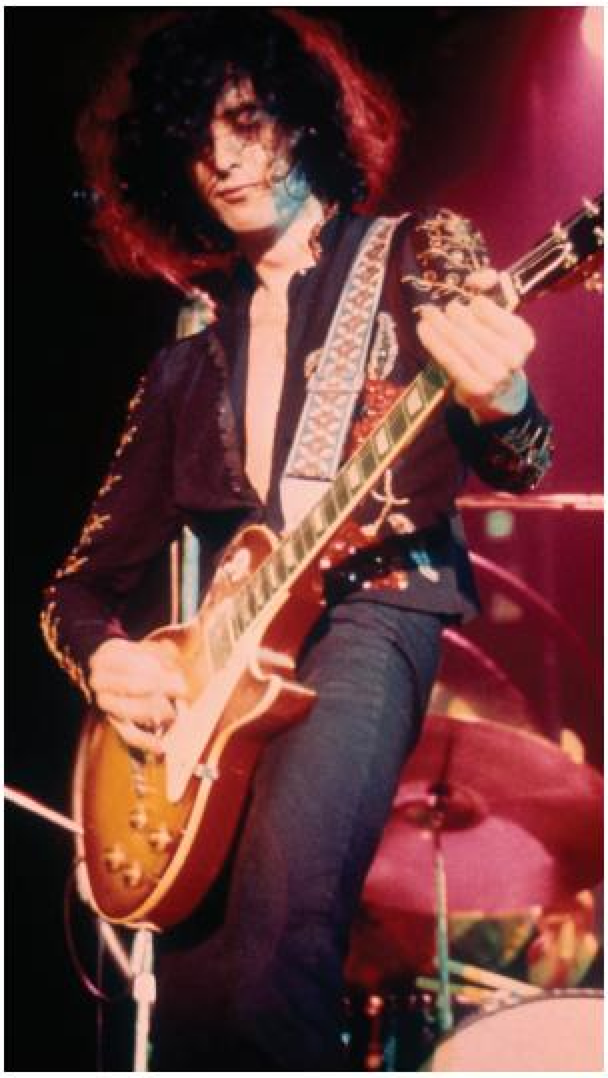
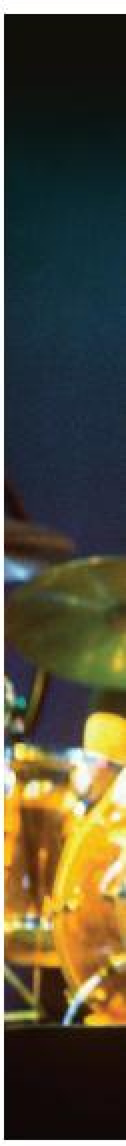
Various shots of Led Zeppelin in performance during 1975.

Bottom left: Jimmy Page playing a Gibson EDS-1275 doubleneck guitar during a concert at Earl's Court, London, on 18 May 1975. The instrument was used most notably during live performances of *Stairway to Heaven*.





aren't many bands into hard rock these days and I think that might account for some of our success. All sorts of people are into folk, country and soft stuff. We just like to play it hard and bluesy.'

By now the group had established its own routine in the studio but amazingly Page still got nervous when it came time to record his solos and insisted that the studio should be cleared.

'Most of the tracks just start off bass, drums, and guitar and once you've done the drums and bass, you just build everything up afterwards. It's like a starting point, and you start constructing from square one.

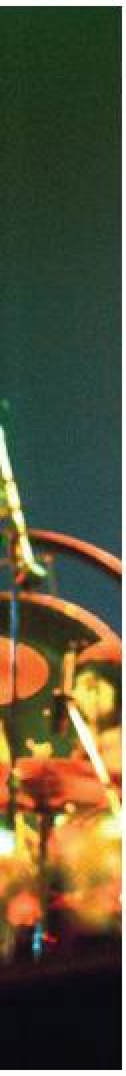
'I don't like anybody else in the studio when I'm putting on the guitar parts. I usually just limber up for a while and then maybe do three solos and take the best from the three.'

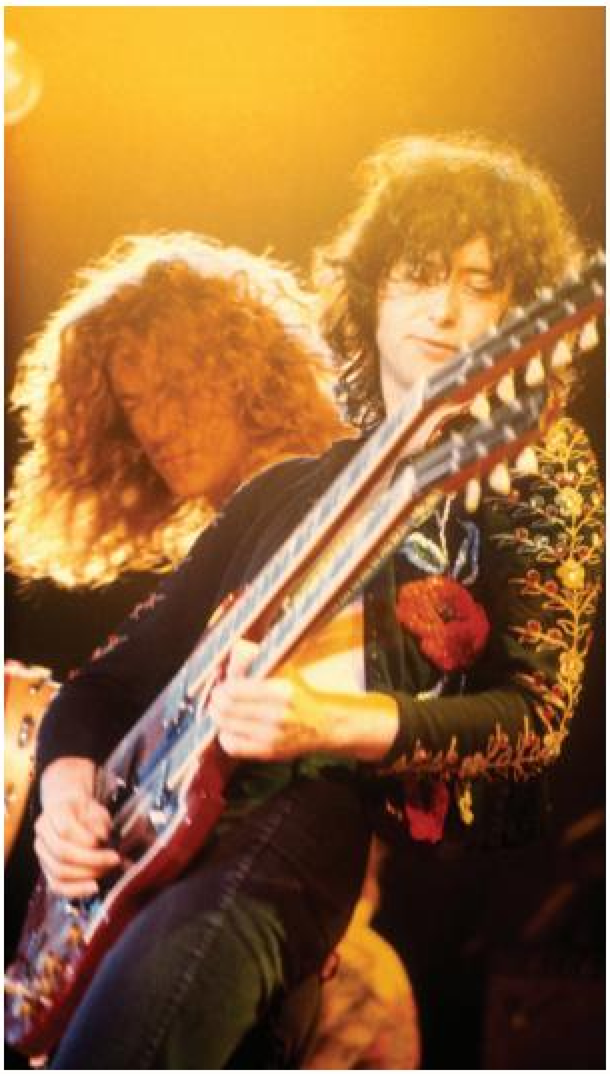
The creation of *Led Zeppelin III* was certainly unusual, involving a remote cottage in the south of Snowdonia, Wales. It was a much-needed contrast to the grind of life on the road, and after another year of touring provided Zeppelin a well-earned break. Keen to avoid the frustrations that had surrounded the second album, the band decided to recharge the batteries and kindle the creative muse with a welcome spell away from the road in a countryside cottage. That cottage was Bron-Yr-Aur ('breast of the gold' in Welsh, referring to the steep hillside on which it stands to this day), it had been a family holiday location for Plant and his parents in the 1950s. The singer suggested it as a bolthole away from the showbiz pressures that now plagued them.

'We'd been working solidly and thought it was time to have a holiday, or at least to get some time away from the road. Robert suggested going to this cottage in South Wales that he'd once been to with his parents when he was much younger. He was going on about what a beautiful place it was and I became pretty keen to go there. I'd never spent any time at all in Wales, but I wanted to. So off we went, taking along our guitars of course. It wasn't a question of, "Let's go and knock off a few songs in the country", it was just a case of wanting to get away for a bit and have a good time. We took along a couple of our roadies and spent the evenings around log fires, with pokers being plunged into cider and that sort of thing. As the nights wore on, the guitars came out and numbers were being written. It wasn't really planned as a working holiday, but some songs did come out of it. After the intense touring that had been taking place through the first two albums, working almost twenty-four hours a day basically, we managed to stop and have a proper break – a couple of months as opposed to a couple of weeks. We decided to go off and rent the cottage to provide a contrast to motel rooms. Obviously, it had quite an effect on the material that was written.'

Inside the gatefold sleeve of *Led Zeppelin III*, with its revolving front cover insert, is the following dedication, 'Credit must be given to Bron-Yr-Aur a small derelict cottage in South Snowdonia for painting a forgotten picture of true completeness which acted as an incentive to some of these musical statements.'

Unfortunately the inspiration the band found in Wales was lost on many critics and to say *Led Zeppelin III* was





savaged in the press is hardly overstating the case. For those who wanted more of the heavyweight riffing of *Led Zeppelin II*, the folksy side of this follow-up was a let down and the few salvos of full-on rock were simply dismissed as more of the same. Of course, this negative media reaction didn't pass the band by.

'Well, it got some bad press. But there was an incredible wave of Led Zeppelin mania, or whatever. We had just finished a very successful tour, and then the album came out and nothing happened. I just thought they hadn't understood it, hadn't listened to it. For instance, *Melody Maker* said we'd decided to don our acoustic guitars because Crosby, Stills and Nash had just been over there. It wasn't until the fourth LP that people began to understand that we weren't just messing around.'

As well as the music, *Led Zeppelin III* was also noteworthy for its unique album cover. Featuring a wheel which, when rotated, displayed various images through cut-outs in the main jacket sleeve, it came as a perfect example of the band's innovative and artistic nature, something that they held so dear. Although Page himself wasn't convinced that the sleeve was all it could be.

'The sleeve was intended to be something like one of those garden calendars or the zoo wheel things that tell you when to plant cauliflowers or how long whales are pregnant. But there was some misunderstanding with the artist – who in fact is very good, but had not been correctly briefed – and we ended up on top of a deadline with a teeny-bop-ish cover which I think was a compromise.'

Zeppelin were increasingly loath to do anything by the book at all, resisting television appearances, shunning many interviews and vehemently refusing to release singles. Jimmy Page explained this somewhat strange behaviour in the late 1970s, when talking of touring *Led Zeppelin III*.

'I felt a lot better once we started performing it, because it was proving to be working for the people who came around to see us. There was always a big smile there in front of us. That was always more important than any poxy review. That's really how the following of the band has spread: by word of mouth. I mean, all this talk about hype, spending thousands on publicity campaigns, we didn't do that at all. We didn't do television. Well we did a pilot TV show and a pilot radio show, but that's all. We weren't hyping ourselves. It wasn't as though we were thrashing about all over the media. It didn't matter, though, the word got out on the street. Now we've done *Zeppelin III*, the sky is the limit. It shows we can change, shows we can do these things. It means there are endless possibilities and directions for us to go in. We're not stale and this proves it.'

The recording of *Led Zeppelin IV* was heavily influenced by Plant and Page's interest in ancient lore and the occult, and it was during this period that their curiosity was most fervent. Plant in particular had evolved an obsession with British folklore and mythology, taking the voguish interest of the day in Tolkien into new realms. Jimmy Page on the other hand had begun to explore the 'dark arts' and took his investigation to a new level by professing an interest in the

THE STORIES BEHIND FOUR ICONIC PIECES OF ARTWORK

Led Zeppelin I

Designed by George Hardie, this iconic artwork was also one of Led Zeppelin's most controversial. Eva von Zeppelin was already unhappy with the band using her family name and had threatened to sue if the band performed in Denmark. This lead to Jimmy Page stating, 'Then we shall call ourselves the Knobs when we go to Copenhagen. The whole thing is absurd.' Led Zeppelin did indeed become 'the Knobs' for one night but thankfully changed their name back for the remainder of the tour.

Led Zeppelin II

This artwork was created by David Juniper, a friend of Jimmy Page's from Sutton Art College. It featured a doctored photograph of the Red Baron's 'Flying Circus' Jagdstaffel 11 Division that had the faces replaced with members of Led Zeppelin, and their team such as their famous manager Peter Grant and tour manager Richard Cole. The sepia tinted image earned the album the nickname 'The Brown Bomber', and was pioneering for the time, as it vastly predated imaging software like Photoshop.

Led Zeppelin III

Another friend of Page's designed the sleeve for *Led Zeppelin III* – the English artist Zacron. It had a very different look to the prior artwork but kept with the theme of flight, and the trademark zeppelin can be seen repeating among the various symbols featured. Zacron has discussed the piece stating, 'Each component became a formal abstract element, interacting with all the images to make a unified whole. The work created a surrealist environment, changing relative concepts of scale and subject matter.'

Led Zeppelin IV

The iconic cover of *Led Zeppelin IV* has spawned countless imitators and can be seen on merchandise around the world. The band were determined to prove their popularity was driven by the music and not media hype, so declined any mention of their name on the sleeve. Jones and Bonham picked their symbols from Rudolf Koch's *Book of Signs*, whilst Plant based his feather design on a symbol for the 'lost continent' of Mu. Page designed his 'ZoSo' icon around a symbol for Capricorn or Saturn.

works of occult figures such as Aleister Crowley. Around the time of making Led Zeppelin's fourth album, Jimmy Page actually bought Aleister Crowley's former home, Boleskine House, on the shores of Loch Ness. He became a serious collector of the works and regalia of 'The Great Beast', as Crowley was known. Jimmy Page spoke about purchasing Boleskine House and his interest in the otherworldly in 1971.

'There were two or three owners before Crowley moved into it. It was also a church that was burned to the ground with the congregation in it. And that's the site of the house. Strange things have happened in that house that had nothing to do with Crowley. The bad vibes were already there. A man was beheaded there, and sometimes you can hear his head rolling down. I haven't actually heard it, but a friend of mine, who is extremely straight and doesn't know anything about anything like that at all, heard it. He thought it was the cats bungling around. I wasn't there at the time, but he told the help, "Why don't you let the cats out at night? They make a terrible racket, rolling about in the halls." And they said, "The cats are locked in a room every night." Then they told him the story of the house. So that sort of thing was there before Crowley got there. Of course, after Crowley there were suicides, people carted off to mental hospitals.

'All my houses are isolated. Many times I just stay home alone. I spend a lot of time near water. Crowley's house is in Loch Ness, Scotland. I have another house in Sussex, where I spend most of my time. It's quite near London. It's moated and [has] terraces off into lakes. I mean, I could tell you things, but it might give people ideas. A few things have happened that would freak some people out, but I was surprised actually at how composed I was. I don't really want to go on about my personal beliefs or my involvement in magic. I'm not trying to do a Harrison or a Townshend. I'm not interested in turning anybody on to anybody that I'm turned on to. If people want to find things, they find them themselves. I'm a firm believer in that. For my own part I feel he's a misunderstood genius of the Twentieth Century. Because his whole thing was liberation of the person, of the entity, and that restriction would foul you up, lead to frustration, which leads to violence, crime, and mental

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FEATURED TRACKS INCLUDE:

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breakdown, depending on what sort of make-up you have underneath. The further this age we're in now gets into technology and alienation, a lot of the points he made seem to manifest themselves all down the line. His thing was total liberation, and really getting down to what part you played. What you want to do, do it. Anyway, that's a minor part, just one of the things they couldn't come to terms with was saying there would be equality of the sexes – in the Edwardian age that was just not on. He wasn't necessarily waving a banner, but he knew it was going to happen. He was a visionary and he didn't break them in gently.'

After recording *Led Zeppelin III*, a sixth American tour took place. It was a draining experience for the band, and signalled time for another break. For Robert Plant and Jimmy Page, this meant a further sojourn to Wales. John Paul Jones and John Bonham retreated to their homes, and only a small entourage went to Snowdonia. During that week in late October 1970, they worked on an idea of Jimmy's that would become one of the most enduring classics of the rock genre, *Stairway to Heaven*.

Back in London before Christmas 1970, Led Zeppelin started recording new material at Island Studios: the opening of *Stairway to Heaven* and a sketch of another track that would later become *Four Sticks*. The album that was now beginning to coalesce was the fourth Led Zeppelin album. Even after all this time, various strands of opinion differ over its title. Most simply refer to it as *Led Zeppelin IV*, others prefer *Four Symbols* or *Runes* while yet another school of thought opts for *ZoSo*. *Led Zeppelin IV* was initially intended to be recorded conventionally in a London studio but the stuffy old approach was abandoned once again – with spectacular results.

'We started off doing some tracks at the new Island Studios in London in December 1970, but after that we went to our house, Headley Grange in Hampshire, a place where we frequently rehearse. For some reason, we decided to take the Stones mobile truck there, because we were used to the place. It was familiar territory. We had even lived there during long rehearsal sessions. It seemed ideal – as soon as we thought of an idea, we put it down on tape. In a way, it was a good method. The only thing wrong was that we'd get so excited about an idea that we'd really rush to finish its format to get it on tape. It was like a quick productivity thing. It was just so exciting to have all the facilities there. Most of the mood for this new album was brought about in settings that we hadn't come across before. We were living in this old falling-apart mansion way out in the country. The mood was incredible. We could put something down on the spot and hear the results immediately. There was no waiting around until you could get into the studio.'

Led Zeppelin in performance during 1975.

'I realized what Led Zeppelin was about around the end of our first U.S. tour. We started off not even on the bill in Denver, and by the time we got to New York we were second to Iron Butterfly, and they didn't want to go on!' – Robert Plant

Hitting stores on 8 November 1971, *Led Zeppelin IV* came out with no indication of either a title or band name on the original cover. Instead four symbols were printed on the LP, one for each of the band members. Jimmy Page explained the band's decision in 1977.

'After all this crap that we'd had with the critics, I put it to everybody else that it'd be a good idea to put out something totally anonymous. At

first I wanted just one symbol on it, but then it was decided that since it was our fourth album and there were four of us, we could each choose our own symbol. I designed mine and everyone else had their own reasons for using the symbols that they used. We decided that on the fourth album we would deliberately play down the group name, and there wouldn't be any information whatsoever on the outer jacket. Names, titles and things like that do not mean a thing. What does Led Zeppelin mean? It doesn't mean a thing. What matters is our music. If we weren't playing good music, nobody would care what we called ourselves. If the music was good we could call ourselves The Cabbage and still get across to our audience. The words Led Zeppelin do not occur anywhere on this cover. And all the other usual credits are missing too. I had to talk like hell to get that done – the record company told us we were committing professional suicide. We said we just wanted to rely purely on the music.

'The old man on the cover carrying the wood, is in harmony with nature. He takes from nature and gives back to the land. It's right. His old cottage gets pulled down and they put him in slums – old slums, terrible places. The old man is also the Hermit of the Tarot cards – a symbol of self-reliance and mystical wisdom. Unfortunately the negatives were a bit duff so you can't quite read an Oxfam poster on the side of a building on the back of the jacket. It's the poster where someone is lying dead on a stretcher and it says that every day someone receives relief from hunger. You can just make it out on the jacket if you've seen the poster before. But other than that, there's no writing on the jacket at all.

'John Paul Jones' symbol, the second from the left, was found in a book about runes and was said to represent a person who is both confident and competent, because it was difficult to draw accurately. Bonzo's came from the same book – he just picked it out because he liked it.'

The music of *Led Zeppelin IV* further refined the band's unique formula of combining folksy, acoustic elements with both blues and heavy metal. The critics lapped it up, with Dave Schulps of *Trouser Press* pronouncing, 'The fourth album was to my mind the first fully realised Zeppelin album. It just sounded like everything had come together.' Nothing encapsulates the happy accidents that occurred at these moments better than the recording of the track *Rock 'n' Roll*, a spontaneous creative combustion.

'We were doing something else at the time, but Bonzo played the beginning of Little Richard's *Good Golly Miss Molly* with the tape still running and I just started doing that part of the riff. It actually ground to a halt after about twelve bars, but it was enough to know that there was enough there as a number to keep working on it. Robert even came in singing on it straight away.'

For those who were listening to this new album back in 1971, it appeared from the opening numbers that the folksiness of *Led Zeppelin III* had been banished. The opening double might even have seemed like bowing to critical pressure. But then came the third track, the ethereal *The Battle of Evermore*.

Led Zeppelin onstage in 1976.
'You would find in a lot of Zep stuff that the riff was the juggernaut that careered through and I worked the lyrics around this.' – Robert Plant

'Um, I forget whether people had gone to bed early or what, but it just came out then. I picked up the mandolin, which was actually John Paul Jones' mandolin, and those chords just came out. It was my first experiment with mandolin. I suppose all mandolin players would have a great laugh, cos it must be the standard thing to play those chords, you know, but possibly not that approach. Anyway, it was just one of those things where I was governed by the limitations of the instrument. Possibly, afterwards, it sounded like a dance-around-the-maypole number I must admit, but it wasn't purposely like that – "Let's do a folksy number".'

Led Zeppelin IV was released on 8 November 1971 in the US and eleven days later in the UK. It wasn't an overnight success – indeed it never did make it to No. 1 on the US album chart. Carole King's *Tapestry* kept it out of the top spot in America, although it did top the UK chart for a fortnight before being knocked off by T-Rex's *Electric Warrior*. However, today it is the fourth most popular album ever released in America – estimates on worldwide sales top thirty-seven million worldwide, with well over twenty million coming from the US alone.

Page himself attributed a good portion of the album's success to Robert Plant's newfound song writing skills, stating of *Stairway to Heaven* in particular.

'I always knew he would be [great], but I knew at that point that he'd proved it to himself and could get into something a bit more profound than just subjective things. Not that they can't be profound as well, but there's a lot of ambiguity implied in that number that wasn't present before. I was really relieved because it gave me the opportunity to just get on with the music.'

As well as being a runaway commercial success, Jimmy Page has always rated his playing on the album as the best of his career.

'Without a doubt it's my best work. As far as consistency goes and as far as the quality of playing on a whole album, I would say it was. I don't know what the best solo I've ever done is – I have no idea. My vocation is more in composition really than in anything else. Building up harmonies. Using the guitar, orchestrating the guitar like an army – a guitar army. I think that's where it's at, really, for me.

'It's not very easy one-time listening, and that's good. You've got to sit down and listen, think about a few things. We can't allow ourselves the luxury of becoming fascinated with our own popularity. The way I look at it, if the Beatles were to get back together, they would forget all about us.'

Of course there is no danger of anyone forgetting all about Led Zeppelin – their well-documented successes and tragedies are forever engraved on to the public's collective memory. Led Zeppelin left behind an enduring body of work that still rocks just as hard today as it did in the seventies. Various new projects were teased in 2019, so it may not be the end of the good times or bad times just yet.

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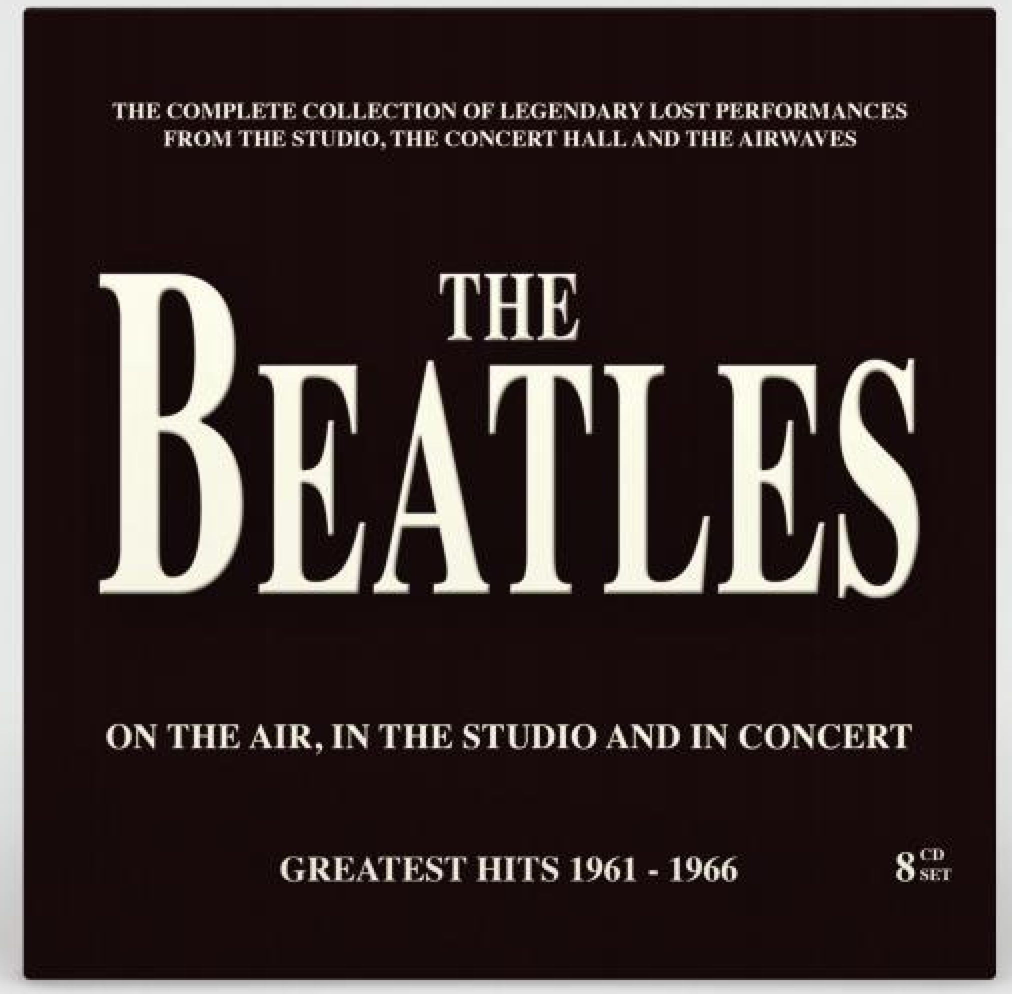
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The Beach Boys Pet Sounds

They are as iconic a band as ever there was, and in 1966 the Beach Boys released their magnum opus. As Brian Wilson's creativity flourished a masterpiece was born. Here, we look at the road to and the record that is *Pet Sounds*.

The Beach Boys pose in London's West End on 2 November 1964.
From left to right: Brian Wilson, Carl Wilson, Mike Love, Al Jardine and Dennis Wilson.

The Beach Boys. Three brothers Brian, Carl and Dennis Wilson, cousin Mike Love and high school friend Alan Jardine.

The name evokes sand, sea, surf, cars, girls, fun, California – in a word, summer. They were a band singing about surfing (most of who couldn't surf) and they were a family band that often couldn't bear to be in the same room as each other. The Beach Boys were portrayed as the quintessential all-American boys, yet behind the scenes they indulged in drink, drugs, womanising and were even linked to the notorious killer Charles Manson.

Formed in the summer of 1961, the Beach Boys (or Pendletons, as they were then called) sprang from the nascent musical genius of the twenty-year old Brian Wilson and his father's largely frustrated musical ambitions. Murry Wilson's contacts in the Los Angeles music industry allowed the band to record a single, which became a huge local hit and, more surprisingly, a minor national chart entry. When the small local label that released the single folded in the spring of 1962, Wilson Senior tirelessly peddled their new songs to every Hollywood record company that he could find. His persistence paid off, for after having been turned down by everyone from Liberty to Dot, Capitol Records finally took a chance, albeit a small one. They bought three songs for $100 each and released a single. The result? A Top 20 hit and a contract for the Beach Boys.

> **'I approach my music-making as an art-form – something pure from the spirit to which I can add dynamics and marketable reality. Music is genuine and healthy and the stimulation I get from moulding it and adding dynamics is like nothing else on earth.'**
>
> **Brian Wilson**

Over the next four years, the Beach Boys and Brian Wilson virtually owned the US rock scene, their only real competition being the Beatles from 1964 onwards. Even so, in the first flush of Beatlemania in 1964, the Beach Boys scored their first No. 1 single and album. Almost without interruption, the hit singles and albums rolled out, and the development of their music kept pace. From surfing to cars to the California good life, Wilson's finger rested unerringly on the teen pulse with a series of increasingly complex songs and themes.

Unfortunately all was not well in the Beach Boys camp, having suffered a panic attack, Brian Wilson had retreated from public performance. He was working behind the scenes composing and songwriting, whilst experimenting with increasingly potent hallucinogens. Brian's drug use had a devastating impact on his life in the following decades, but in 1965 he found it inconceivably inspirational. He felt as if his mind had been opened and that he was hearing sound in a brand new manner. The product of this creative boon was the iconic *Pet Sounds*.

Released in 1966, *Pet Sounds* directly challenged the Beatles pop supremacy and is now universally regarded as one of the best albums ever.

In the decades since it was first released, *Pet Sounds* has become rightly regarded as one of the classic albums of the sixties. It regularly appears at, or very

near, the top of the 'Best Album of All Time' polls conducted by the various branches of rock media. Yet, when it was released in 1966 it was considered something of a failure, presumably because it stalled in the US Top 10, unlike the preceding six original LPs which all went to No. 1. *Pet Sounds* failed to formally achieve gold status for many years (although a recent re-accounting of the album's sales has determined that it had actually sold enough to qualify for 'gold' status – sales of over 500,000 units – during the summer of 1967). Al Jardine has since reflected on the time stating, **'There wasn't much time to bask in the success, or lack thereof. It was not received very well at the label. It took a while to catch on, but fifty years later, it appears it has been very worthwhile. This was not expected, because we were the Beach Boys, remember? I mean, come on, with a name like that? It took a while to realise there was a genius in our midst. Brian should get a Peace Prize. I don't know – you know what? Screw this, he should have gotten a Grammy for that.'**

That the album stayed on the US album chart for thirty-nine weeks and contained four Top 40 singles is usually overlooked. Simply put, Capitol Records just didn't know how to market the album. This is understandable as *Pet Sounds* came in the wake of two huge hit albums based firmly around the concept of fun, fun and yet more fun. This deviation from the Beach Boys classic style may have been the reason Capitol had *Best of the Beach Boys* ready for release, if necessary. The long held perception that the compilation (which enjoyed eighteen months in the chart and was certified double platinum) was released as a move to deliberately sabotage Brian Wilson's pride and joy doesn't quite hold up under close scrutiny. *Pet Sounds* was already beginning to descend the chart when the compilation was released, and given that Wilson was taking far longer to complete a project than before, preparing such a compilation was just good business practice back then.

The major inspiration for Brian Wilson to create *Pet Sounds* was the release of the Beatles' *Rubber Soul*. As Brian has often

The Beach Boys during their performance at the T.A.M.I. Show on 28 October 1964. They performed with fellow legends such as the Rolling Stones and Chuck Berry, the Beach Boys performed *Surfin' U.S.A.*, *I Get Around*, *Surfer Girl* and *Dance, Dance, Dance*.

stated in interviews, he considered *Rubber Soul* a complete album that 'went together like no album ever made before'.

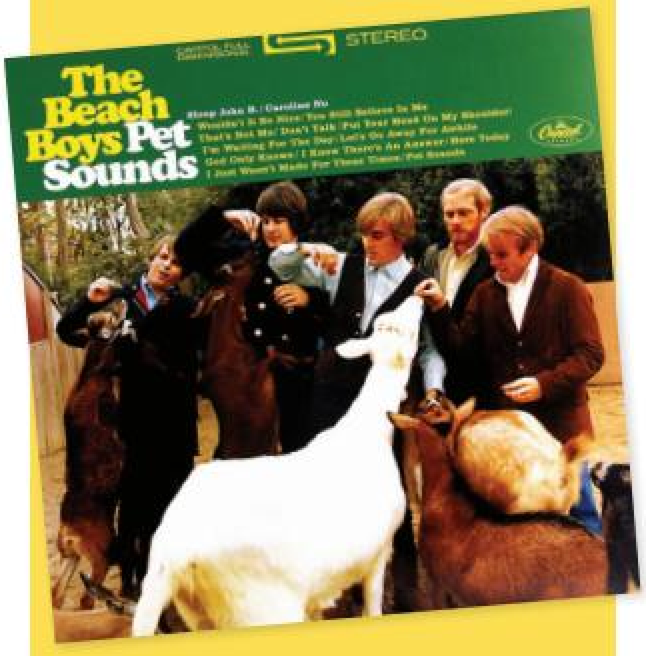
He felt the release contained all good tracks, no fillers, and it spurred him to do something similar, only better. It is worth noting that the *Rubber Soul* that so moved Brian was the American version. Right up to *Sgt. Pepper's*, Capitol produced their own versions of Beatles albums by including singles and mixing tracks from as many as three different LPs, thus the American version was somewhat different from the UK release.

For this new project, Wilson refined his compositional method – rather than write a complete melody, he started writing what he called 'feels … specific rhythm patterns, fragments of ideas', from which the melody and lyric would later evolve. This was a time-consuming process, however, so when Capitol once again reminded him in December of 1965 that a 'proper' album was overdue, he only had a handful of completed instrumental tracks in the can. One was a sparkling adaptation of the folk standard *The Wreck of the John B*, recorded back in July 1965, after a suggestion from Alan Jardine. Another was a spiky number tentatively dubbed *Run, James, Run*. A third untitled piece featured a perky trombone, and a fourth number was called *In My Childhood*, about which he was in two minds.

A further complication was that Wilson had very firm ideas about the lyrical content of this new album, and was looking around for a new wordsmith. Remembering a chance studio encounter in 1963, he called the office of Tony Asher, a jingle writer, and put the proposition to him. Once Asher was convinced he wasn't having his leg pulled by a colleague, he accepted on the spot, gained a three-week leave of absence from work and drove on up to Wilson's house.

The first assignment was to come up with new lyrics for (the then-titled) *In My Childhood*. Brian had written some already, but decided he hated them, so he handed Asher a copy of the track and asked him to come up with something better. The result, handed in the following morning, was evidently acceptable, and the pair settled down to writing material from scratch. Asher has since stated, **'That was a good way to start things off. It's a great luxury – at least for a lyricist – to write to tracks because you have a much better sense of what the musical mood of the song is. And here was a case where it was real clear what Brian had in mind.'**

Although both composers have repeatedly denied that there is any underlying concept to the album, it's not too hard to discern the themes of longing, love found, love lost and of a certain resignation to one's fate. Further, by a judicious rearrangement of the track listing, a coherent storyline documenting the rise and fall of a relationship just about emerges. For decades, the presence of the lyrical sore thumb that is *Sloop John B* was attributed to Capitol Records demanding its inclusion on the grounds of it being the current hit single. This, however, is nonsense – even if an early track listing including *Sloop* dated mid-February hadn't been discovered in the 1990s, Brian Wilson was still recording



The cover image for *Pet Sounds* simply featured the members of the Beach Boys feeding a collection of goats. The shots were taken at the San Diego Zoo on 15 February 1966, in the children's petting paddock.

The staff were initially hesitant to let the animals be featured, and were left disgruntled by the band's apparent mistreatment of the goats pictured. The Beach Boys vehemently denied any wrongdoing, with Bruce Johnston recalling, 'The goats were horrible! They jump all over you and bite. One of them ate my radio. The zoo said we were torturing the animals, but they should have seen what we had to go through. We were doing all the suffering.' Al Jardine has corroborated this story stating, 'You know the big white one on the front? The most obnoxious animal I've ever known in my life. Pushed me, and all of us, all over the place. If you had a little piece of something in your hand, he'd know it. And he'd almost trample you trying to get that thing!'

Bruce Johnston was unable to appear on the cover for contractual reasons, but it's unlikely that he is disappointed, as in hindsight as all the Beach Boys have since expressed their displeasure with the cover. Tony Asher has commented that he felt the name and cover, 'trivialised what we had accomplished.' And Al Jardine has stated that it was 'crazy' to shoot there. However, this may be more due to the fact that he thought Pet Sounds referred to making out or 'heavy petting' and had no idea why they were at a zoo in the first place.

'In my heart of hearts, I think that the reason *Pet Sounds* isn't a billion-selling album is simply that the label didn't believe in Brian … Why wouldn't you allocate a massive budget to promote *Pet Sounds*? This album is timeless and forever, and the label turned it into an ignored stepchild.'
– Bruce Johnston

the album in late April, well after the single was released. As with the rest of the album, it was Brian's idea all along.

Pet Sounds is sometimes referred to as being essentially a Brian Wilson solo album with the Beach Boys guest starring as vocalists, and there's more than a grain of truth in that. With one exception, the band hardly contributes at all instrumentally; two cuts are instrumentals and two more are solo Brian vocal performances, which left nine songs that feature the band vocally. Al Jardine has addressed this remembering,

'Usually, when you'd do an album like that in the old days, you'd have nine or ten good tracks that you're happy with, but you're required to have at least eleven or twelve. So we'd always make an instrumental track or two to fill out the album … that's really what happened.'

The band were on tour for the January sessions and on reporting to the studio, much head scratching ensued that is best summed up by Alan Jardine's observation, 'Well, it sure doesn't sound like the old stuff!'

Of the instrumentals, the title track (originally named *Run, James, Run*) was semi-seriously intended for the James Bond movies. In 1966 Brian Wilson reflected, **'It was supposed to be a James Bond-theme type of song. We were gonna try to get it to the James Bond people. But we thought it would never happen, so we put it on the album.'**

> **'People always thought Brian was a good time guy until he started doing those heavy, searching songs on *Pet Sounds* and all, but that stuff was closer to his own personality and perceptions. By the time people get close to an accurate picture of Brian Wilson – if ever – he's gonna be far beyond them again.'**
>
> **Dennis Wilson**

The song in question is a strangely angular and uncertain affair of some tension that nestles in perfectly towards the end of the record.

Let's Go Away for a While was once considered by Brian Wilson to be 'the most satisfying piece of music I've ever recorded', an assessment with which many fans and commentators agreed. Wistfully languid yet strangely soothing and compelling, it's perfect late-night music. Reportedly, it was at one point entitled *Let's Go Away for a While (And Then We'll Have World Peace)*, a reference to the 1959 album *How to Speak Hip*. No lyrics were ever written, despite many claims to the contrary.

Sloop John B, though lyrically at odds with the rest of the album, is a definite stylistic fit and given that the track was recorded in July 1965, it could be argued that it was a template for the remaining sessions. A track of sparkling invention is overlaid with a joyous group vocal arrangement that includes a thrilling chorus with an a capella section of

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The Beach Boys perform onstage in the 1965 movie *The Girls On the Beach*.
Left to right: Al Jardine, Carl Wilson, Dennis Wilson, Mike Love and Brian Wilson.

considerable power. It was a US Top 3 hit and is still a concert standout after some forty-one years. *In My Childhood* evolved into the hymn-like *You Still Believe In Me*, an ode of wide-eyed wonder that the subject's lover is still there. Stately without being slow, Brian Wilson's lead vocal is amazement sweetly personified, yet the highpoint of the track is the awesome block harmonies from the band on the chorus (or as close as the song gets to a chorus). The bicycle bell and horn are relics from the song's earlier form, as the instrumental track was largely re-recorded, but these were mixed in and couldn't be erased. Asher leaning inside the piano, and plucking the strings as Brian pressed the keys achieved the distinctive chiming intro.

Brian's 'solo' tracks are both outstanding examples not only of his effortless and effective falsetto, but also Tony Asher's lyrical facility in conveying Wilson's emotional intention. The string arrangement for the evocatively titled *Don't Talk (Put Your Head On My Shoulder)* knocked spots off anything the Beatles had, or would, come up with. Backing vocals were recorded for this stately item, but wisely discarded (they instead featured as a bonus track on the first CD reissue). Where *Don't Talk* was warm and comforting, *Caroline, No* was bittersweet and resigned to loss. The identity of Caroline is claimed to be Brian's high school crush, Carol Mountain, and the song rings with a palpable longing. Although Brian has since dismissed the infatuation: **'If I saw her today, I'd probably think, "God, she's lost something," because growing up does that to people.'**

Nonetheless the sense of loss, or maybe betrayal, is eloquently expressed. *Caroline, No* also features some unique percussion from the legendary drummer Hal Blaine, who played the introduction to the track on upturned Sparkletts water jugs. *Caroline, No* was released as a Brian Wilson solo single at the same time as *Sloop John B*, and it performed quite respectably reaching the US Top 40.

One of the more pertinently titled songs of his career, *I Just Wasn't Made for These Times*, is all but vocally also a solo Brian Wilson song (the rest of the band are present on just one of six tracks of backing vocals). This song also marks his first ever use of the theremin, the curious instrument that would become such an integral part of *Good Vibrations*. The lyrics are a less-than-subtle cry for more understanding from his friends that

must have caused Mike Love's remaining hairs to bristle. That said, as a summary of the then-prevailing situation with both band members and the record company, it was spot-on. *That's Not Me* was the sole track featuring any sizeable musical contribution from band members. Love's excellent vocal conveys a growing sense of self-doubt and insecurity – he might not have particularly liked the material, but he still gave it his best shot. The odd drum patterns accentuate the uncertainty inherent in this strangely up-tempo track.

The doubt turns to something close to petulance in *I Know There's An Answer*, for which Alan Jardine turns in a sterling vocal performance. Boasting an unusual synergy of banjo and bass harmonica, this track proved a potential flashpoint under its original title of *Hang On to Your Ego*. Even though he didn't sing the offending words, Love (who claimed at the time not to know what an 'ego' was) took great exception to both the title and the tone of the song. In the interests of both the project and group harmony, Brian acquiesced and the lyrics were amended.

I'm Waiting for the Day and *Here Today* both address the thorny subject of love head on, albeit from different sides of the coin. *I'm Waiting for the Day* was originally composed in 1964 and credited to Brian Wilson alone. It takes the position of someone waiting for the object of their affections to recover from their previous relationship, the overall tenor being, 'It's OK, I'll be here when you need me'. Ushered in by a raucous tympani intro, Brian's vocal is by turns forceful and comforting as the lyric demands, and the track itself is by turns reflective and assertive. The song is also notable for the distinctive flute trills in the middle eight. By way of contrast, *Here Today* takes the ex-boyfriend's somewhat jaundiced point of view of love. The highlight of the track is Love's vocal, nicely balanced between concern for a friend, remembering how things were and the cascading bass figure. Those of a musical bent might notice a riff that later appeared in *Good Vibrations*. The initial sessions for the hit single were held during those for this album, indeed, the song was included on the early track listing.

Displaying their customary commercial nous in dealing with the Beach Boys, Capitol Records picked the two best songs on the album and released them as both sides of a single. Paul McCartney, no less, regards *God Only Knows* as the best song ever written, and Al Jardine has also showered it with high praise: **'The one thing that did stand out was *God Only Knows*. In my opinion, it was one of the best things we ever attempted and completed. It stands as one of the best songs ever written, in my opinion. I think I'm in good company with that assumption.'**

Carl Wilson's vocal on *God Only Knows* is angelic and the lyric is effective, simple without being simplistic. The shimmering instrumental track is a lesson in the 'less-is-more' approach to production. And that's without even considering the closing vocal round, which is simply beautiful. *God Only Knows* reached the Top 40 as a B-side, but had it featured as the A-side, it would have doubtless equalled or surpassed the Top 10 status of *Wouldn't It Be Nice*.

Wouldn't It Be Nice, the spirited opening track to the album, exudes love and the most innocent of yearnings from every pore, from the delicate guitar intro to the circular vocal fade. Powered by accordions, it is complex yet never inaccessible. Brian Wilson and Mike Love's vocals sit atop a group harmony cushion of incredible lushness – it's irresistible. The initial CD reissue of *Pet Sounds* included the bonus tracks already mentioned plus one tagged *Trombone Dixie* in lieu of any better handle. The album has been frequently reissued on CD since its release, but the pinnacle was the release in 1997 of the 4 CD box set, *The Pet Sounds Sessions*. This masterly compilation comprised excerpts from the instrumental tracking sessions, the vocal sessions (all in stereo), a mono remaster and a first ever-true stereo mix. It is truly one of the best box sets of all time and we highly recommend it.

The release of *Pet Sounds* in 1966 left an incredible legacy, yet by the summer of 1967, it was all over; a fall from grace that rock 'n' roll had not yet seen. Although both the Beach Boys and Brian Wilson had a number of small triumphs along the way – isolated flashes of what once was and might have been – neither regained their former glory. Wilson in particular became one of rock's most notorious casualties, mentioned in the same breath as Syd Barrett or Rocky Erickson, re-emerging decades later after several false starts. The Beach Boys themselves, diminished by the death of Dennis Wilson in 1983, effectively ceased to exist in 1998. Nevertheless their music persists; as influential and timeless as ever. As long as there is a summer, the boys of endless summer will have an audience. A world without the Beach Boys' music? Unthinkable.

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THE BIG QUESTIONS

We asked and you answered! For each issue we will be putting the big questions to the public. We will be finding answers to the queries that rock fans have debated for decades. Keep an eye on our social media platforms to have your say in our next poll.

This issue we asked …

Who is the greatest bassist of all time?

The results are in; they have been checked, double-checked, triple-checked and verified, and the winner is … *drum roll please* …

John Entwistle

The Who in 1965. (Left to right) Pete Townshend, Keith Moon, Roger Daltrey and John Entwistle.

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EVERYONE

John Entwistle has always enjoyed a reputation as one of the world's best bass players. Famed for his success with The Who, he has been inducted in to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and labelled 'Bassist of the Millenium' by *Musician Magazine*. He provided the grounding for the sound of The Who and was thought of as the strong, silent member of line-up (hence his nickname 'The Ox'). Yet, still waters run deep and Entwistle's enormous talent was fully revealed in the early seventies, with a string of excellent Who projects and the release of his solo albums. Here we look at two archive interviews surrounding the release of the classic albums *Quadrophenia* and *The Who by Numbers*.

First a little more about the man himself – John Entwistle was born in Chiswick, London on 9 October 1944. Growing up he was a reserved and quiet child with few friends who lived with his divorced mother and grandparents in South Acton. Music was always in his blood, as both John's parents were keen musicians; his mother played the piano whilst his father favoured the trumpet. At the age of seven, John made his first foray into musicianship when he took up piano lessons. Unfortunately he found them uninspiring and quickly switched to playing the French horn in his school orchestra, this classical training played a large part in forming John's musical sensibilities. Another huge influence on the young John was the music of legendary US guitarist Duane Eddy. Like many future rock stars of the era, John was inspired by his twanging guitar sounds and quickly abandoned the horn, keen to emulate his new hero. John was in fact so keen to learn that he constructed his own bass guitar at home and began to practice on that.

> 'I set myself up to be a bass guitarist and bass players get a lot more work than people like me.'
>
> John Entwistle

At the age of fifteen John Entwistle was approached by Roger Daltrey who had put together a band called the Detours. Roger was familiar with Entwistle's talents on bass as they had both attended Acton County Grammar School, and he was keen to bring his him on board. At that time John was already making music with a young Pete Townshend, so John insisted that Pete also be accepted into the Detours and The Who was born.

The Who quickly became famous for their explosive live performances, something Entwistle was key in developing. All the members of The Who played at full volume, and Entwistle

The Who appear in Amsterdam for a television appearance, 20 September 1965. Left to right: Pete Townshend, Keith Moon, John Entwistle and Roger Daltrey.

became one of the first musicians to use Marshall stacks in an attempt to make sure his bass was heard over the noise. The bass certainly was heard, and in turn forced the other band members to up the ante so their instruments could equal Entwistle's volume. This was a self-perpetuating cycle that ended in The Who being famed as one of the loudest bands around. In fact they were *officially* the loudest band around, as a 1976 Who concert in London is listed in the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the loudest rock concert in history.

John thrived on the stage, and it was his live performance that earned him a nickname other than 'The Ox' – 'Thunderfingers'. This moniker stemmed from the blur that his thick fingers would become as they frantically moved over the strings on his bass. It truly was a marvel to watch, and on occasions he would step forward to stun audiences with blistering solos in numbers such as *5:15* or *Dreaming from the Waist*.

The Who's onstage performance and set up had a huge impact on their contemporaries, and they proved an inspiration to many iconic groups such as Cream and The Jimi Hendrix Experience. Throughout their career The Who were uniquely individual and always blazed a trail in what they created. Indeed it was The Who's destruction of their instruments that inspired some of Jimi Hendrix's most memorable onstage guitar stunts.

Although he truly shone onstage, John's contribution to The Who's body of work cannot be underestimated. He provided the macabre, dark influence that can often be found in The Who's lyrics, and was often charged with writing about subjects that Pete found uncomfortable. Some notable examples of his lyrical work within The Who are *Heaven and Hell*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Doctor Doctor*, *Silas Stingy* and *Someone's Coming*. Of course no such list would be complete without a mention of *Boris the Spider* – a bizarre little track that is totally unforgettable and a personal favourite.

The eccentric nature that is evident in *Boris the Spider* revealed itself in other areas of John's life as well. He collected all manner of eldritch memorabilia and antiques, leaving his homes often looking more like museums. As well as owning more guitars than any other rock musician, Entwistle was also at one time in possession of, a stuffed tarantula, a human skeleton, various suits of armour and a life-sized effigy of Quasimodo. This last article was suspended by a bell rope in the hall of his sprawling Gloucester mansion and must have made for a very strange welcome to many visitors.

Whether there were many visitors is another matter, as although he was always well liked, John was an introverted character. In fact Bill Wyman, the bass guitarist for the Rolling Stones, once referred to him as, 'the quietest man in private but the loudest man on stage'.

Outside his work with the Who, Entwistle pursued many passion projects of his own. He was the first member of the band to release solo material with *Smash Your Head Against the Wall* in 1971, an excellent release that typified his unique brand of black humour. He then went on to release five studio albums, chronologically, *Whistle Rymes*, *Rigor Mortis Sets In*, *Mad Dog*, *Too Late the Hero* and *The Rock*.

As well as music, Entwistle always had a passion for art. He first started aged six, on a class trip to Dartmouth where they were meant to sketch the regatta, but John instead caricatured the teachers.

His best friend stole one, showed it to a teacher, and John was ushered before the headmaster. Who, instead of caning

John Entwistle in 1966.

John, gave him a sheaf of papers and said to perfect it and enter the exhibition, which he won.

John pursued his love of drawing throughout his life and whilst in The Who, created the cover for an album *The Who by Numbers*. Yet, it was during the 1990s that his art career was really able to flourish and his distinctive style of line drawing and caricatures saw him gain a cult following. John was thrilled by the reception his work was receiving and was sure to thank each collector that exhibited his work with a personal quote and a sketch of Boris (the spider). Buoyed by this newfound confidence in his art, John moved on from line drawing to more complex sketches of his rock contemporaries and produced some stunning work.

The 1990s were a prolific time for John and he was also part of a number of musical endeavours. As well as continued work with The Who, Entwistle was involved in The John Entwistle Band, Ringo Starr's All-Starr Band and a country rock band called the Pioneers.

John signed up to play a number of US dates with the Pioneers following his 2002 tour with The Who, but sadly never made the appearances.

John Entwistle died at the age of fifty-seven in the Hard Rock Hotel Las Vegas. Although he had been diagnosed with an existing heart condition, he went out in true rock and roll style – high on cocaine whilst in bed with a stripper.

So ended the life of an incredible artist and musician, as well as a uniquely creative individual. Tributes poured out to the star after his passing, including one from his bandmates Pete Townshend and Roger Daltrey that read, 'The Ox has left the building – we've lost another great friend. Thanks for your support and love.' Whilst 'The Ox' may have left the building his legacy certainly lives on; his musicianship and flair inspires as many today as it did in the 1970s and with his official biography due for release in March 2020 he will certainly not be forgotten any time soon.

This interview is taken from *Beat Instrumental*, November 1973. At the time John had been busy with his solo projects and the making of the classic who album *Quadrophenia*.

It all started some two years ago when friends pressured John into making a solo album, which was entitled *Beat, Your Head Against the Wall*. It continued through *Whistle Rymes* right up to his rock and roll album *Rigor Mortis Sets In*. Now, rather than rest on his laurels, Entwistle is preparing for the next two years of his career – which will be busier, more demanding and, therefore, more satisfying than anything that has gone before.

He'll be getting his own band, Rigor Mortis, on the road. Making at least two more solo albums, plus one with the band, doing session work, producing, supervising the enlargement of his West London home, breeding carp (their fishpond has to be enlarged, too) and on top of all this he'll be touring, recording and enjoying his time-honoured role with The Who.

Ask him why he's doing all this and he'll reply with a quick shrug of his shoulders: **'I'm not content with just being known as The Who's bass player – there's still a side of me that wants to play classical and brass material.'**

It seems that his colleague in superstardom, Pete Townshend, has the same sort of ideas regarding classical and brass music. John described for us how *Quadrophenia* – The Who's new concept album due out in November, and written entirely by Pete – has been shaping up.

The Who in 1968.
Left to right: Pete Townshend, Keith Moon, Roger Daltrey and John Entwistle.

'This album has been a lot easier for me. There aren't any of my compositions on it because Pete had written too much material. Each number is important to the story line, which is about a little mod and all the things that go through his head.'

The Who, were spawned and rose to stardom in 1964 from among the ranks of West London mods. Beginning life as the Detours, they changed their name to the High Numbers and finally became The Who. They were the darlings of a whole sub-culture that thought of red socks, hush puppies, parkas, blue-beat hats, chrome-laden scooters, mohair suits and their very own band, The Who as 'flash, very flash'.

'*Quadrophenia* has been much easier for me because I've had a free hand as to what I play on bass. In the past the arrangements of each number have been set. For instance, if you get a number like *Happy Jack*, where the bass line is dunk, dunk-dunk; you can't really stray away from that. That's not to say that I've never had any freedom, but if the bass line conflicts with the rest of the number it shouldn't be done. At no time has Pete ever told me what to play but, as a bass man, I've obviously been dictated to by the format of the number.

'The new material from Pete, however, has given me more opportunity for playing the bass part that I actually want. I've been able to put all those little embellishments in. I think this represents a basic change in the direction of Pete's writing. The songs are longer, but I think the main point is that the chord progression of each one doesn't happen so quickly, so one has more time to explore. Instead of playing half a bar in C and then going to G, the new stuff will have, perhaps, a whole bar in C to play around with.

> 'I ain't heard anyone play like I do in my band and I am very happy about that.'
>
> John Entwistle

'He's writing in a more classical style, too, and I had to play an awful lot of brass for the album. There's about seven numbers with huge, fourteen-piece brass parts on them that I arranged and played myself. Pete gave me a completely free hand 'cause he knew where he wanted the brass but he didn't exactly know what he wanted.'

Townshend's and Entwistle's relationship is so close that Pete can send John into the studio after having only briefly explained what is required. Entwistle then proceeds to deliver the goods. It's a relationship that has developed over a ten-year period, during which The Who have been through everything, sometimes individually, but for the most part together.

'In the parts of *Quadrophenia* where Pete knew exactly what he wanted, he put on horn sounds with a synthesiser, so, as you can imagine, the album is quite orchestrated. There's brass, synthesised strings, flutes and things like that.

'It's taken us a couple of months to make the album and we did most of the backing tracks using Ronnie Lane's

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FEATURED TRACKS INCLUDE:

London Calling, **Tommy Gun**, **White Riot**, **English Civil War**, **I Fought the Law**, **Complete Control**, **Clash City Rockers**, **Train In Vain**, **The Magnificent Seven**, **Bank Robber**, **Rock the Casbah**, **Should I Stay or Should I Go** and many more.

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The Who at Shepperton Studios, in Surrey, England during May 1974, during a break in concert rehearsals.

mobile studio which we had situated at The Who's new studio in Battersea. Our studio was completed by the time we'd done the backing tracks and we used it to put on the over-dubs. Ronnie's studio worked fine for us, me in particular, because I like to get all the backing tracks out of the way.

'The way we work is to make sure that the backing tracks stand up on their own and then we use the over-dubs to provide colour. It hasn't always been the same. On previous occasions where we've got a poor backing track we've tried to make the number work by doing over-dubs. We learned our lesson the hard way, we need to work out good backing tracks for stage use 'cause that's where The Who really gets off.

'The important thing about the new album, however, is that people shouldn't approach it in the same way they approached *Tommy*, 'cause it's not like *Tommy*. *Quadrophenia* is altogether more believable than *Tommy* 'cause it deals more with everyday life. I'd call it a period, historical opera, although I don't like the use of the word opera, especially when the storyline is about the scooter mods.'

When the album has been released, The Who will take *Quadrophenia* on the road or, as is more likely, parts of it. The rest of The Who's stage act on their forthcoming European, British and American tours, will be used to provide John Entwistle and Roger Daltrey with the opportunity to perform some of the material from their respective solo albums. The band has seen such a growth in terms of output from its individual members that it's hard to compile a truly representative stage act these days.

'After two years of hardly any stage work, I'm sure we're going to enjoy ourselves immensely. We thrive on work anyway, and I'll most likely find that it'll be a lot easier to write material between playing the live dates. If I'm up on stage and I think of a good riff, then it could easily develop into another number for me.

'This next two years will be the busiest period in my life. I'm excited and I'm worried all at the same time. I'm worried, or should I say concerned, about the time factor. There's such a lot to do and between it all I've got to find time for a holiday. I'm sure I'm going to need one, it's either that or a nervous breakdown!'

Following the *Quadrophenia* tour in 1974 The Who took an extended break from performing. This was ostensibly to create the album, *The Who by Numbers*. However, behind the scenes things were not as straightforward. Pete Townshend was suffering a crisis brought on by turning thirty. At this ripe old age he worried that he was too old to play the rock music that The Who had championed and became disillusioned with the entire music industry. He created some downbeat and melancholy lyrics for the album, but left the band to record them almost without him. Throughout this trying period the one solid constant was 'The Ox' and it was moments like these that earned him the nickname. Pete Townshend has since recalled this stating, 'Roger was angry with the world at the time. Keith seemed as impetuous as ever, on the wagon one minute, off the next. But John was obviously gathering strength throughout the whole period; the great thing about it was he seemed to know we were going to need him more than ever before in the coming year.'

In spite of these difficulties The Who released their seventh studio album *The Who by Numbers* on 3 October 1975. It peaked in the charts at No. 7 in the UK and No. 7 in the US. The album produced the smash hit single, *Squeeze Box* a lascivious number full of double entendre and cheeky charm. However, Entwistle was less than impressed with the success of the single, as he elaborates in the following article.

***John Entwistle: Is This the Right Man for Mayor of Acton?* first appeared in the February 1976 edition of *Sounds* magazine.**

For those of you hoping, with *Squeeze Box* a hit, for a new flow of Who singles, John has some words. **'I'd leave. I just don't like the singles market. I'm used to concerts and albums. The record company says the album's going down in the charts and we need a single to revive interest. So we release a single and the album goes out of the chart. I wouldn't mind if we never released another single, ever.'**

And if this is a surprise, he hasn't finished yet.

'It's kind of pot luck, that side of the business. You don't have to be that talented to have a hit single, whereas you do to have a hit album. It's just a matter of pride. I hate releasing a poor little song to compete against football teams, comedians, wrestlers, one hit wonders. It's degrading. In fact, having a hit is extremely embarrasing! [People say] "I've heard your single on the radio." Why aren't they playing the rest of the bloody album?

'I hate singles. I hate the whole thing about *Top of the Pops*. The other three can [appear on the show], I wouldn't.'

Clearly he doesn't like singles. What do you think of the album then?

'The best we've done since the last one. I like the cover. That's pretty good.' Another smile escapes. Entwistle's demeanour is humorous and wry, but he rarely smiles. The cover is an example of Entwistle's cartooning ability; the band and surrounding personnel has been the source of most of his work the past eight years. There are no plans for anything like a book, though the better examples will find wall space in John's new manse. He's also been working on an adult fairy story, with his illustrations, though this is currently shelved.

With The Who an operational unit again, Entwistle's solo enterprises are in abeyance. Ox came to a halt due to expense and other reasons, and he wouldn't organise a band again unless they were name musicians. The last two years he's been writing **'a concept – I won't say opera, because it isn't, it's a musical story'.**

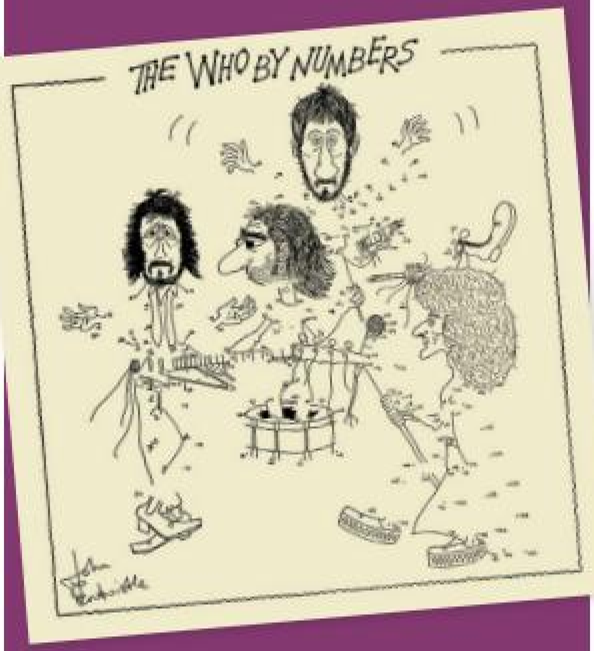
That has now been shelved in favour of a straight rock album (he is careful to differentiate between this and rock and roll). **'My writing's changed considerably since the *Rigor Mortis* days. It's more like *Squeeze Box* and *Heaven and Hell*.'**

But as I say, The Who are an operational unit. Next week they start rehearsing for a tour through Paris, Munich and Zurich, then fourteen dates in the States and a month holiday before recording the next album. They are trying to organise some gigs in British football grounds in late May, the proceeds going to charity. **'Better than the Inland Revenue – at least we know where it's going.**

'We're at a stage now where we enjoy working again. All we really require is time for rehearsing and writing, and school holidays. Because we've all got kids who we only see at that time. So as long as we have the same time off as teachers …' He smiles again.

John used to work in the Inland Revenue. **'I was a hopeless tax officer.'** Thoughts of tax and business occupy him. He points out that one needs to work five times as hard to double one's money in the current structure. He presents the old 50% tax and we'd stay chestnut, but he does anyway, for his family mostly. And patriotism.

'And the way I'd want to live in America is a house in Los Angeles,

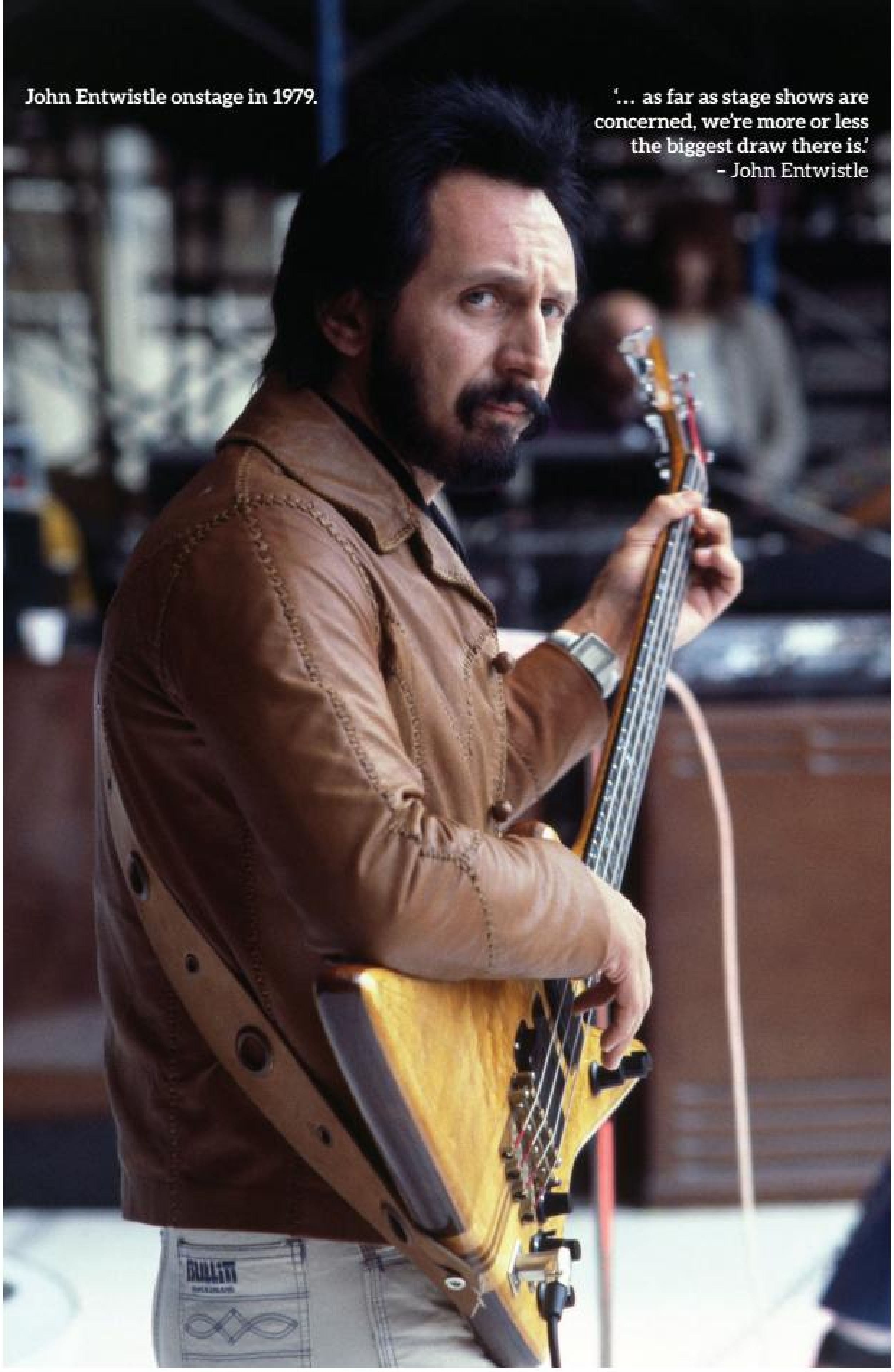


The Who by Numbers
The Artwork

As well as being instantly recognisable with its monochrome line drawings, the cover of *The Who by Numbers* is notable for being drawn entirely by John Entwistle. Adding a touch of fun and irreverence to the fairly dark release, the cover features each of the band members as caricatures with parts missing and invites the listener to join the dots.

The inspiration for the illustration was a colouring book belonging to John's son Christopher, but included some tongue-in-cheek adult touches, such as the comic placement of the dot for number one: **'The cover drawing only took an hour, but the dots took about three hours! I took it down to the studio while we were mixing and got the worst artist in the room to fill it in. Discovered I'd left two inside legs out.'**

In the 1990s John was encouraged to create an exhibition of his work by his longtime friend and manager Cy Langston. At this display they chose the artwork for *The Who by Numbers* to become the first limited edition serigraph. In 1996 John commented, **'The first release is *The Who by Numbers* cover, which I never got paid for, so now I'm going to get paid. We were taking it in turns to do the covers. It was Pete's turn before me and we did the *Quadrophenia* cover, which cost about the same as a small house back then, about £16,000. My cover cost £32.'**



John Entwistle onstage in 1979.

'… as far as stage shows are concerned, we're more or less the biggest draw there is.' – John Entwistle

a house in New York and a boat in Miami.' Hearing this whilst propping up the pub-like bar in a stately home in the middle of Ealing's suburban glory was a bit incongruous.

From John's point of view one also gets an interesting impression of The Who as a business. Reinvesting profits back into equipment and music oriented companies, hiring a staff of fifty for a tour – **'Which is a hefty cocktail bill'** – having four of every piece of equipment.

'The lasers were acquired via the interest of studio manager John Wolf. They're as long as a bar billiards table and water-cooled. At Hammersmith the Ministry of Defence looked them over and declared The Who more advanced than they were.

'And all that stuff gets shipped to America, where the group are, how you say, huge. There, *The Who by Numbers* is doing reasonably well. It's heading for a platinum. We have gold for everything since *Tommy*, actually. I have about thirty-five of the things, most of them under the billiards table because I haven't any room. We've started getting silver and gold here as well.'

On the subject of records, the concept album is not to be discounted from rearing its head again, but Entwistle would like to see another live album. **'We sell a lot of records, but compared to some people they're very few. But as far as stage shows are concerned, we're more or less the biggest draw there is.'** Which you may take as an indication of quality.

At Pontiac, Michigan, where Elvis' New Year's concert drew 60,000, The Who packed 76,000 in, which John contends should be in the *Guinness World Book of Records*.

'In the end, it all comes down to 'the kids'. We may not like the town or the hall, but the kids are always the same. It's worth playing for the kids. If we could fly in and out the same night it would be great, but you can't fly to Australia overnight.' The land of Oz is invoked mainly due to memories. **'If you're a foreigner and lose your temper, there's no sympathy … As I found out in Houston.'**

Here it was, at the start of their last American tour, that John wanted to know why the police who were hired to protect them at a party were restraining Laser Man, alias John Wolf, replete with foot on neck. As John was being escorted away from the scene by security men also hired to protect them, he broke free, lost his temper and kicked over a large wooden menu stand. At which moment the hotel detective, also protecting the group, walked out of the lift and slapped handcuffs on John.

Sitting in a cell, feeling a flea bite him, he was questioned by three police women who had been at the concert and were now after inside info. Then he was ushered upstairs for a mug shot. **'A mug shot, fer Chrissakes!'** Standing on the foot prints, he waited. A woman stepped up with an Instamatic – flash! – and said, 'It's for my daughter'.

It is not known whether this incident will hinder his lifelong ambition to be Mayor of Acton.

And that next Who album. It will just be another bunch of songs? **'I hope so. Otherwise it'll be a couple of years before we're finished.'**

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A big thank you to all our readers who voted in our 'Greatest Bassist of All Time' poll. This issue it was such a close run race that we thought it only fair to dedicate an honourable mention to our runner up …

Les Claypool

Without a doubt Les Claypool is one of the most unique bass players (and maybe musicians) out there. Most famous for his work as the founder and only continuous member of Primus, Les has always pushed the envelope whatever project he is involved in.

Claypool has released a number of solo albums, as well as featuring in such acts as, the supergroup Oysterhead, Colonel Les Claypool's Fearless Flying Frog Brigade, Colonel Claypool's Bucket of Bernie Brains and Les Claypool's Fancy Band. This is in addition to creating books, films and most famously TV theme tunes. Those unfamiliar with Les Claypool would undoubtedly recognise the intro from the hit TV show *South Park*. He was also responsible for the theme to Robot Chicken, which featured on his solo album *Of Whales and Woe*.

Claypool's real musical journey started in high school when he joined a band his friend, and future Metallica guitarist, Kirk Hammett. He then honed his craft performing R&B numbers in biker bars with The Tommy Crank Band. It was during this time that Les realised he needed his own outfit in order to express his creativity and developing songwriting. This outfit became Primus, as Claypool told *Kerrang!* in 2019, **'I started [Primus] as Primate in 1984. It was myself and a drum machine. And then a buddy of mine on guitar joined and we did that for about four years with eight different drummers … while I was touring in a band with [guitarist] Larry LaLonde. We became friends and I invited him to join the band, and he said, "Hell yeah!" And there he was.'**

The kooky outfit took off, selling far more records than anyone anticipated. By the time Primus signed to Interscope Records in 1990, they had already sold more than 80,000 records independently. Interscope have long enjoyed a sterling reputation for allowing bands free expression, and it is largely their work with Primus that this stems from.

Over the years Claypool has been allowed the creative freedom that his unique visions require. He has always been innovating, and still is to this day. In February 2019 Les released *South of Reality*, his second album with The Claypool Lennon Delirium (his psychedelic rock band with John Lennon's son Sean Lennon). Les Claypool's ideas are always unique, but it is undoubtedly his immense talent that has made them so successful today. His style is inimitable and inventive, combined with a completely flawless technique. There can be no doubt that his maestro was born to play bass, and we can't wait to see what he comes up with next.

Claypool summed it up best in a 2019 interview with *Bass Player* musing, **'You can apply what I've said about bass to many aspects of existence on this planet. We're all taught and encouraged to conform and fit in, and wear the same style of collar and hair and shoe, and watch Friends, and the people who raise a few eyebrows are the ones who change things. Your experience with any new people is such a good way of expanding your perceptions … I've always tried to be pretty casual about the way I approach things. Because I have so many different projects going, I just start assembling songs, like making a junkyard sculpture. Y'know, like there's an old gas tank over here and a bit of tractor over there … so when it comes time to record, I look and see what lyrics I've got and start building. It's like doodling on a scratchpad. That's what I do – a lot of doodling!'**

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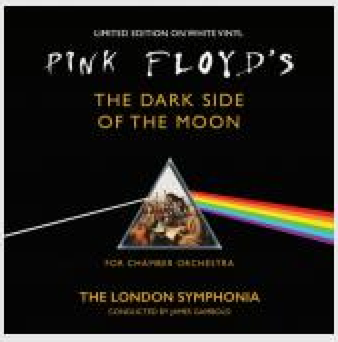
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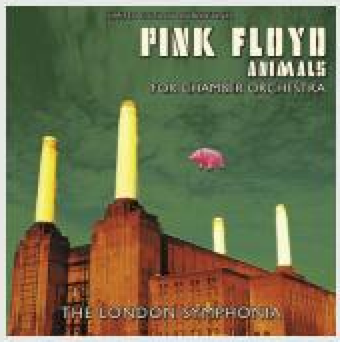
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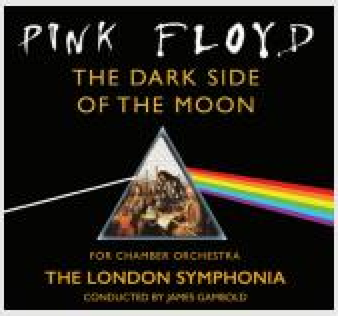
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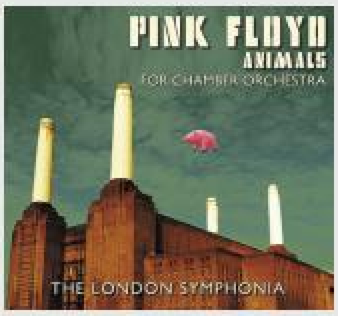
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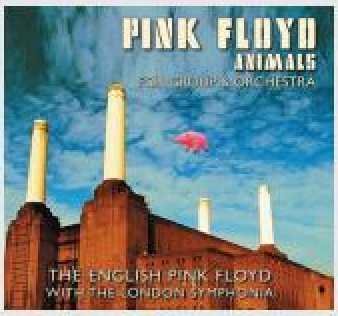
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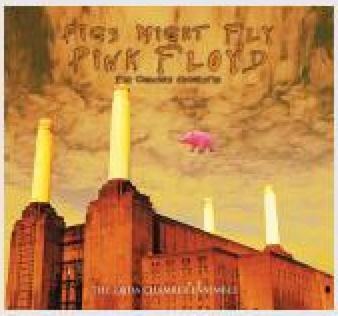
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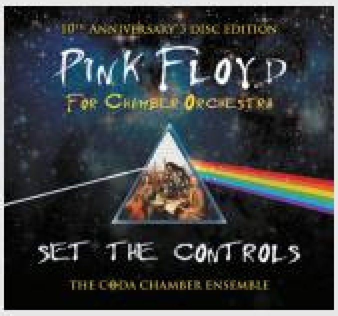
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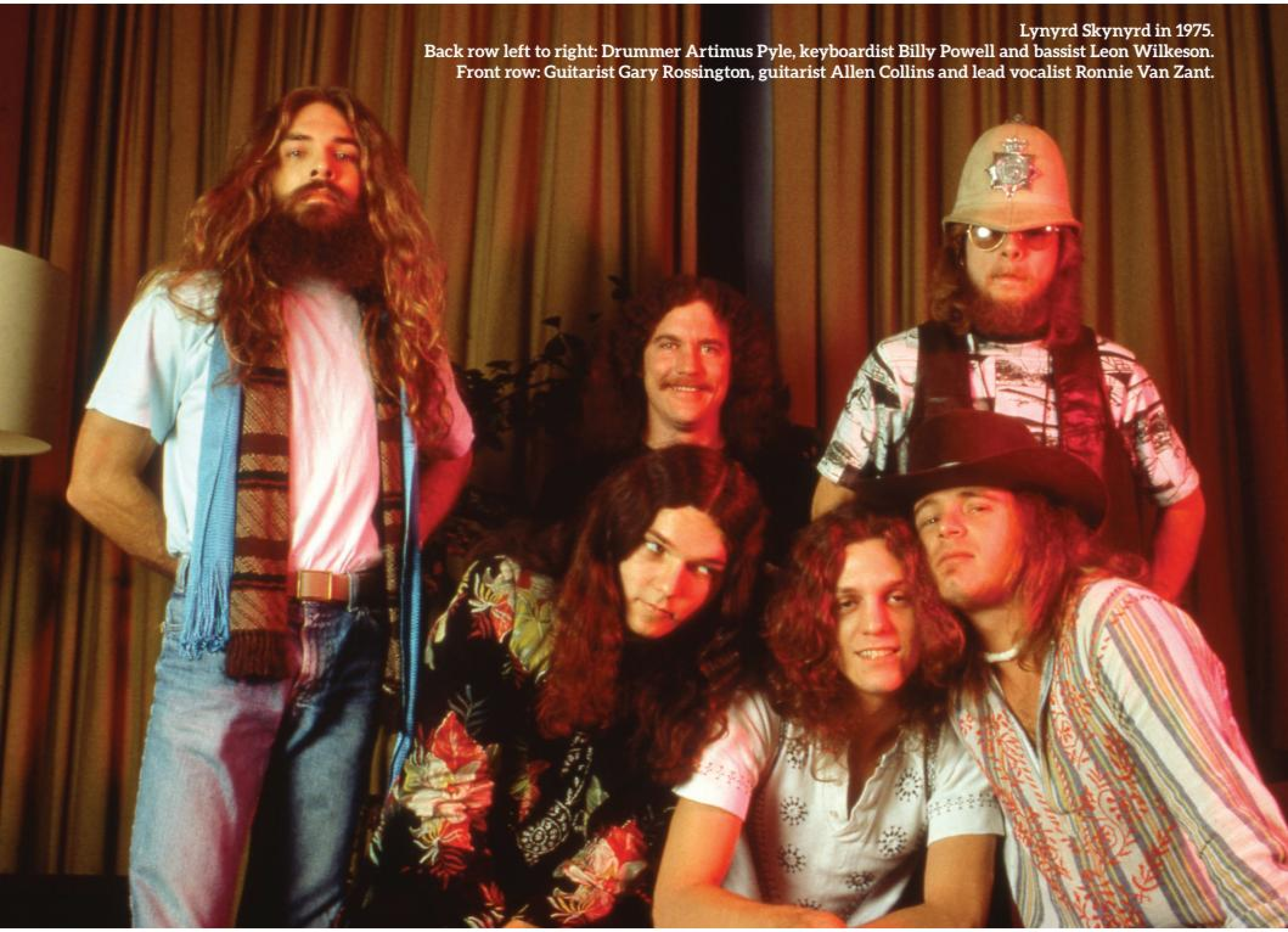
LYNYRD SKYNYRD

THEIR MOST OUTRAGEOUS MOMENTS

The name is synonymous with long hair, leather jackets and the flag-waving Deep South. Their effortlessly memorable riffs provided the basis for some of the best-loved rock classics of the seventies, however the music was often overshadowed by the band's bust ups and bad behaviour. Here, we recount some of the most outrageous and controversial moments of Lynyrd Skynyrd's illustrious career.



Lynyrd Skynyrd in 1975.
Back row left to right: Drummer Artimus Pyle, keyboardist Billy Powell and bassist Leon Wilkeson.
Front row: Guitarist Gary Rossington, guitarist Allen Collins and lead vocalist Ronnie Van Zant.

CONFEDERATE CONTROVERSY

As touched upon in the intro, the imagery of Lynyrd Skynyrd cannot be complete without the backdrop of a Confederate flag. The unfortunate decision to use this for stage shows was actually that of the record company MCA. With the obvious racial connotations of the flag, most groups would have pushed harder to distance themselves from the iconography, however Lynyrd Skynyrd were proud southern boys and, as a relatively new band, firmly under the sway of their record label.

MCA was excited by the success of Al Kooper's sub division 'Sounds of the South,' in the early seventies and loved the idea of establishing the Southern Rock genre, particularly since the Allman Brothers had made it so big. Provided they could sell the idea to the fans, they hoped to unleash a whole panoply of Southern bands onto the public.

Understandably, many others saw the Confederate flag as standing for the racist apartheid movement that existed in organisations like the Ku Klux Klan, and Lynyrd Skynyrd found themselves uncomfortably linked with this movement. MCA's decision had backfired terribly and Lynyrd Skynyrd found themselves hounded in interviews and the press, yet were lucky to have an established fan base that carried them through the uncertain time.

> 'If prisons, freight trains, swamps, and gators don't get ya to write songs, man, y'ain't got no business writin' songs.'
>
> **RONNIE VAN ZANT**

It was not until the controversy over *Sweet Home Alabama* some years later that MCA decided it was finally time to distance themselves from the imagery once and for all and stopped using the Confederate flag as a backdrop for Skynyrd shows.

CAT THROWING

This infamous incident occurred during the band's first visit to England in 1974. Bob Burns had become so befuddled by alcohol and LSD that he defenestrated a hotel owner's cat believing it to be a demon. 'He thought that cat was possessed' Rossington recalled, 'and he went a little nuts. Threw it out the window.' The quote itself is also notable for the questionable use of the term 'a little nuts'.

THE DRINKING

Lynyrd Skynyrd were one of the heaviest drinking bands in rock. Although their hard living caused no shortage of personal and professional problems, the band stuck at it with a zeal that is almost unmatched. In fact that personal motto of guitarist Rossington was said to be 'If you ain't pukin', you ain't high.' Which references his love of Quaaludes, a drug that magnifies the effects of alcohol. Ronnie himself once denied the band's excesses with the infamous quote, 'We're really not into alcohol, 'cause when I'm home I only get drunk maybe once a week. When we're on the road it's different.' The only issue with this statement was that Ronnie Van Zant was on the road three hundred days of the year.

TRANSPORT TRAUMAS

To say that Lynyrd Skynyrd have been plagued by transport issues would be a dramatic understatement. Throughout the years they have been involved in collisions and accidents involving with cars, motorcycles and eventually airplanes.

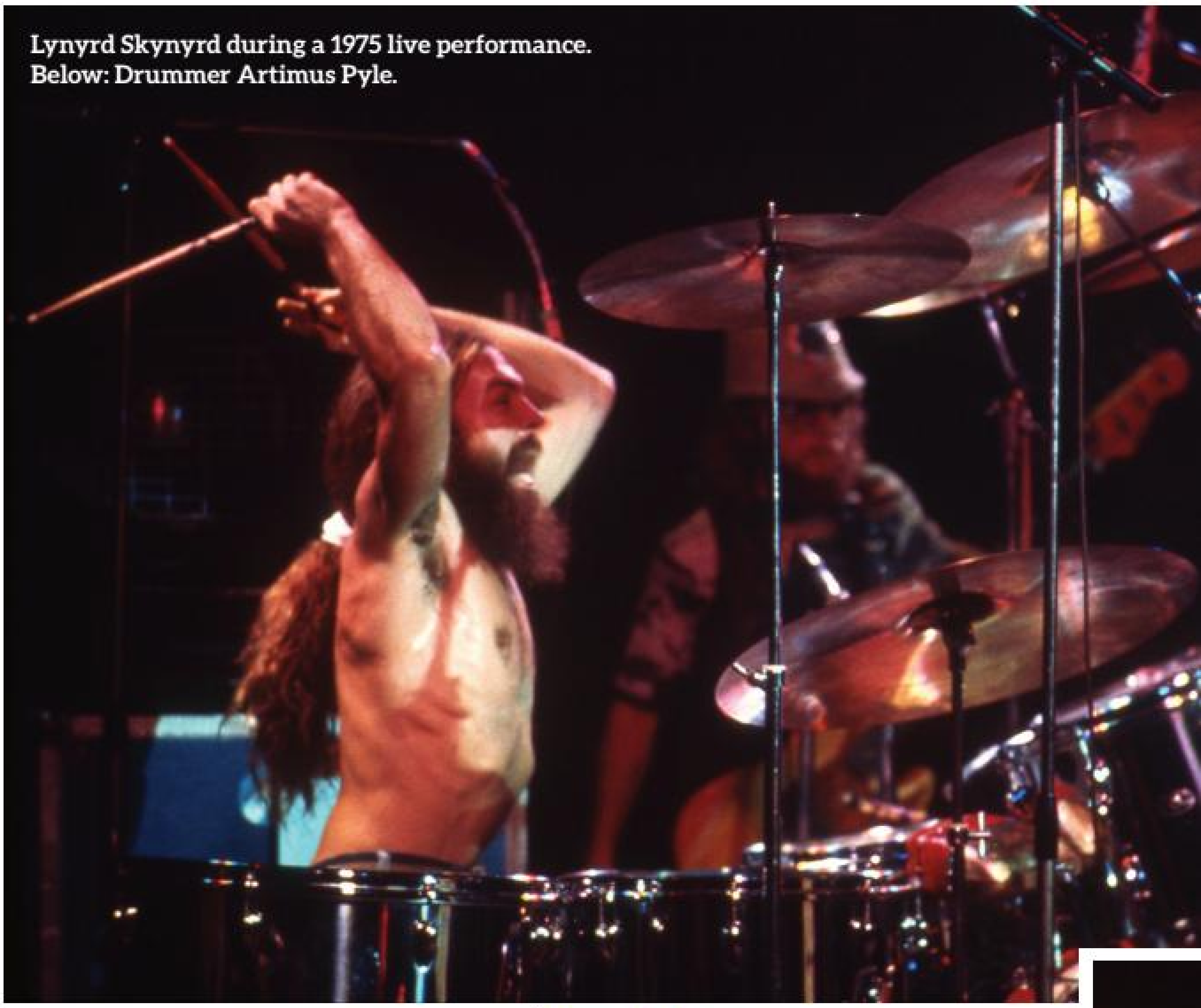
The first tragedy occurred when the fresh-faced young band were still known as The Noble Five, and their bass player Jimmy Parker was tragically killed in a road accident. The next came prior to their 1974 visit to England, when founder member and drummer Bob Burns was involved in a fatal collision that resulted in the death of the other driver. The guilt surrounding this incident caused Bob's drinking to increase in an attempt to blot out his growing depression. This in turn led to the outlandish behaviour (such as smashing a toilet and 'the cat incident') that resulted in his first departure from the band.

The band learned nothing from these tragedies, and in 1976, both Collins and Rossington were involved in car crashes whilst intoxicated, whilst Powell injured himself badly in a motorcycle crash. Since then the drummer Artimus Pyle also broke his leg in a car crash (although he was not found to be at fault) and guitarist Allen Collins was paralysed from the waist down after causing a car crash that claimed the life of his girlfriend. Finally, Bob Burns was tragically killed in a car accident in 2015 at the age of sixty-four.

TAKING ON THE WORLD

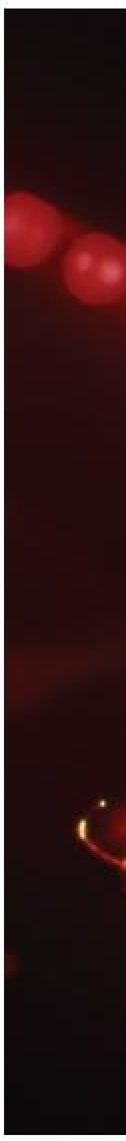
It was well known that Lynyrd Skynyrd were not a band to be messed with, Van Zant in particular was a southern fireball who lived up to his reputation as a brawler. Indeed there were times when even poking your head through the tour bus door could earn an eager fan a punch in the face from Van Zant. Unfortunately one such incident ended in disaster when Van Zant did just this in San Francisco. He made the questionable decision of chasing the victim, only to find himself vastly outnumbered by the man's friends and was beaten bloody as a result.

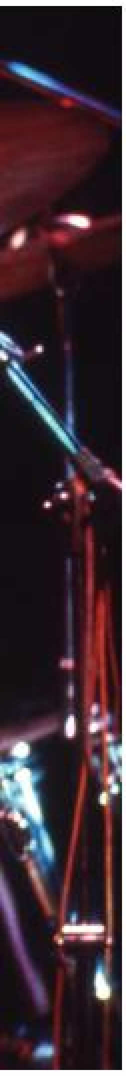
Again no lessons were learned, and when on tour in England, Powell became involved in a fracas that left him with a broken finger. Intoxicated and keen to avenge their bandmate's injury, Rossington and Pyle set off in search of the guilty parties. Unfortunately, in their haste to catch up to the perpetrator they loudly burst in to the Police Athletics Convention. Unsurprisingly the super fit policemen in attendance did not take


Lynyrd Skynyrd during a 1975 live performance.
Below: Drummer Artimus Pyle.

Ronnie Van Zant

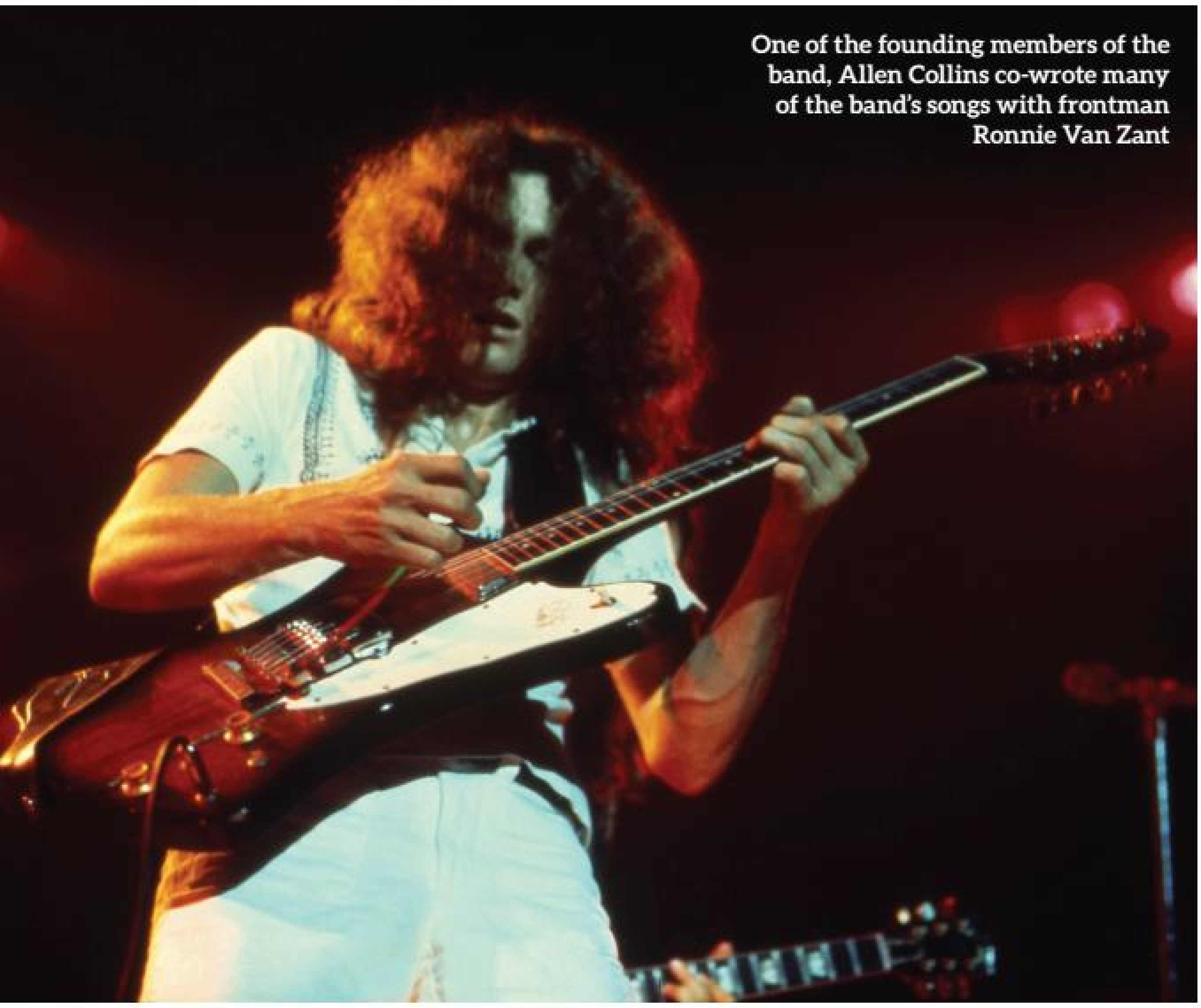
Leon Wilkeson





Allen Collins

Gary Rossington



One of the founding members of the band, Allen Collins co-wrote many of the band's songs with frontman Ronnie Van Zant

kindly to the loutish behaviour and Powell found himself ejected (none too gently) from the hotel. Pyle fared far worse and earned himself a bruise covered night in the police cells.

There really are too many of these encounters to list. Lynyrd Skynyrd even found themselves in the middle of mass brawls in countries as far flung as Japan. There a nightclub was trashed during an altercation with some German tourists, on Ronnie's birthday no less. The punch-ups were so commonplace that by the time *Double Trouble* was released in 1975, Van Zant had racked up an incredible twelve charges for fighting.

TAKING ON EACH OTHER

Lynyrd Skynyrd's penchant for a scrap did not contain itself to members of the public. In fact some of the most rancourous fighting could be found within the band and crew.

One famous incident occurred when the band were recording their fourth studio album *Gimme Back My Bullets*. Tensions between Van Zant and his team had risen to the point where one night he attacked John Butler from the road crew with a bottle. In the ensuing fight, Rossington's hands and wrists were badly damaged. For a guitarist this was the ultimate hell, and it was some time before Rossington forgave Van Zant. This particular fracas ended up being immortalised by one of the press headlines that read, 'When a band starts slashing each other's wrists before gigs, you know they're confident.' It would be natural to assume that such a vicious fight would be the result of a profound disagreement, however it has since been revealed that the altercation sprang from a disagreement over how to correctly pronounce the word, 'schnapps'.

This was not the only disagreement with crew to turn nasty and Lynyrd Skynyrd's stage manager Joe Barnes left the tour after a mid-air fistfight. Again the root of the argument was bizarre, with the parties fighting over possession of a piece of broken wood that Barnes had deemed to be dangerous and therefore confiscated. Van Zant is said to have punched, and even held a bottle to the neck of Barnes, who understandably parted ways with the band following the eventful flight.

Although many of these famous stories feature Van Zant most prominently, all the band members (with the exception of Artimus) were known for their love of a scrap. Rossington has since commented, 'Bob Burns had super-strength. He was like The Hulk. He would hit a wall, and if you or me hit it there might be a little dent, but if he hit it, it would go in six inches. He threw Ronnie around, too.' – a truly terrifying thought indeed.

THE FENDER FIGHTERS

Ed King departed Lynyrd Skynyrd in 1975 citing Van Zant's unreasonable behaviour. Van Zant was so saddened and angered by this, that he forced Wilkeson to destroy the Fender bass King had left behind for him to play. During a gig Van Zant's frustration reached breaking point and he had Wilkeson smash the guitar to pieces onstage, in a scene akin to an early Who concert. This was greeted by rousing cheers from the unsuspecting live audience who believed it all part of the show.

'I don't understand this phrase "I've paid my dues." We didn't have any money and lived on peanut butter and jelly, and I loved it. I don't regret any of it. We never expected to make it this far, but we worked hard to get here.' – Ronnie Van Zant

NOT SO SWEET HOME ALABAMA

Sweet Home Alabama is one of the most recognisable hits of all time and was a huge success for Lynyrd Skynyrd. Unfortunately the single's release saw the band once again embroiled in accusations of racism. These claims stemmed from the fact that he song was written as a response to two numbers by Neil Young, *Southern Man* and *Alabama*. These two tracks decried the South's history of slavery and continued racism. Despite the noble intention the lyrics came across as highhanded and many a 'southern man' felt himself to be personally attacked by an overly sweeping statement. This perceived slight was actually what Lynyrd Skynyrd were objecting to, as can be seen in lyrics such as, 'Well, I heard Mister Young sing about her/Well, I heard ol' Neil put her down/Well, I hope Neil Young will remember/A Southern man don't need him around anyhow'. Although it was painted as a rock feud in the press, both Neil Young and Lynyrd Skynyrd have always expressed their admiration for each other. Van Zant was even frequently seen in Neil Young T-shirts during the following years, most recognisably on the cover of *Street Survivors*. In 2012 Neil Young reflected on the famous dispute stating, 'My own song *Alabama* richly deserved the shot Lynyrd Skynyrd gave me with their great record. I don't like my words when I listen to it. They are accusatory and condescending, not fully thought out, and too easy to misconstrue.' A statement that puts the issue to bed once and for all.

LIEUTENANT LYNYRD

In 1975 the controversial governor of Alabama, George Wallace, made the members of Lynyrd Skynyrd Honorary Lieutenant Colonels in the Alabama State Militia. Perhaps so they could blow the enemy away with the power of their rock 'n' roll riffs? The band were

less than impressed by this move by the outspokenly pro-segregation politician, and stated in the press, 'I support Wallace about as much as your average American supported Hitler!'

THE CV-240 CRASH

No article about Lynyrd Skynyrd would be complete without touching upon the tragedy that was the band's 1977 plane crash. The disaster claimed the lives of Ronnie Van Zant, guitarist Steve Gaines, Steve's sister and backing vocalist Cassie Gaines, assistant road manager Dean Kilpatrick, the pilot Walter McCreary and the co-pilot William Gray.

The tragedy occurred on 20 October 1977, when the Convair aircraft carrying Lynyrd Skynyrd ran out of fuel approximately ten miles from its destination in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The pilots attempted to make an emergency landing in a field, but were obstructed by a tree line that eventually broke the plane apart.

Whilst twenty of the passengers survived there were terrible injuries and the results have been debilitating in many cases.

Although the events of that day have seemingly been well documented, this incident makes our list of controversies for the wild speculation and conspiracy theories that have spawned among fans since.

There are certainly many spooky coincidences surrounding the tragedy. Ronnie Van Zant had been adamant for some time that he would not live to the age of thirty. He was twenty-nine at the time and his music had taken a dark turn lyrically with songs such as *That Smell*, 'That smell of death surrounds you', which he had composed with his bandmates in mind.

Van Zant had also taken to referring to himself as 'The Mississippi Kid', a state that he had no ascertainable link to, other than being the place that he died. JoJo Billingsley, a backing singer in the Honkettes, claims to have been woken in the night by a vivid vision of the plane crash. Fellow Honkette Casey Gaines (who died in the crash) was said to be so terrified of the flight that she hid in the equipment truck and reportedly only joined the crew onboard after being told by Ronnie, 'Hey, if the Lord wants you to die on this plane when it's your time, it's your time. Let's go, man. We've got a gig to do.'

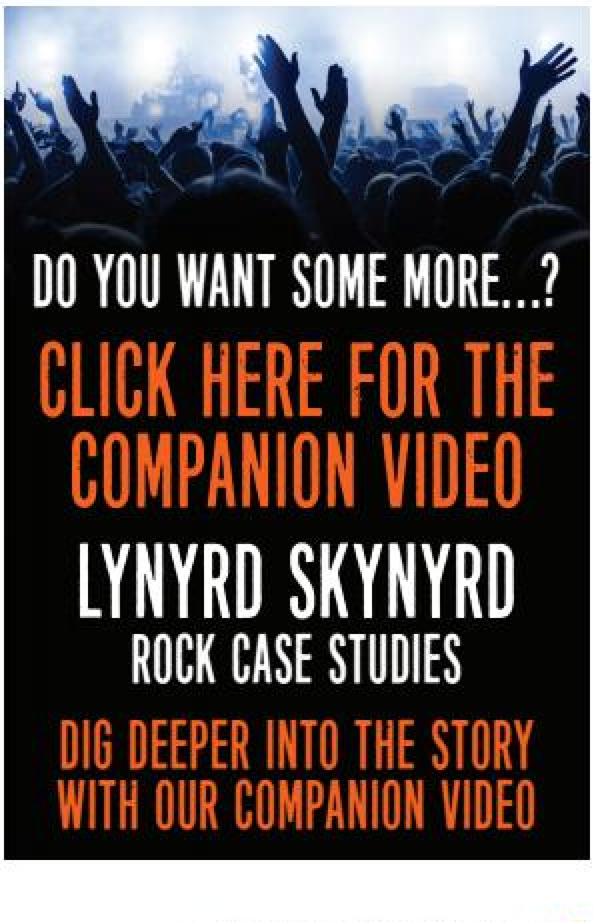
After a mid-air fire on the previous flight, most of the passengers were apprehensive about travelling on the thirty-year-old aircraft again and they were planning to hire an upgrade after this journey.

The management of fellow rock group Aerosmith had actually looked at leasing the plane previously, however they found neither the aircraft nor the crew to be of a fitting standard. Aerosmith themselves were keen to proceed with the rental and were said to be thoroughly shaken when they heard the news of the crash.

Most of the speculation surrounding the crash has come from the fact that the plane did actually have adequate fuel for the journey on its departure from Greenville, South Carolina. A credible theory, and one that has been supported by the testimony of various passengers, is that the pilots, whilst attempting to transfer fuel between the engines, accidentally jettisoned the load. There was certainly found to be a malfunction with the right engine that resulted in it 'torching' fuel, so it would make sense to increase the supply there.

Whatever the circumstances surrounding it, the fact is that it was incredibly fortunate that so many passengers made it out alive. This is in large part thanks to the clear thinking and bravery of Artimus Pyle, who had clocked the location of the nearest farm from the air and lead the search for help through the pitch dark forests.

It is through Artemis' efforts that Lynyrd Skynyrd are still rocking a stage to this day – the indomitable band are currently on the road with their farewell tour. Fortunately the music seems to be one of the only things that hasn't changed, and the wild antics detailed here are a now thing of the past. The band may have mellowed with time (over fifty years with eighteen different line-ups will do that) but their legacy continues undiminished. The classic songs they created are still as well known today as ever, with tracks such as *Free Bird* and *Sweet Home Alabama* indelibly engraved onto the public psyche. The bandmembers may have changed, but one thing has not – their reputation as the greatest Southern rock band of all time. They came, they saw, they fought everyone in sight. Long live Lynyrd Skynyrd.



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EMERSON, LAKE & PALMER

Tarkus to *Trilogy* and Beyond

The name Emerson, Lake & Palmer may have sounded just a little corporate in the era of Fat Mattress, Big Bertha and Skin Alley. However the band soon destroyed any suggestion of conforming through wild sonic experimentations and larger than life stage shows. The exceptionally talented trio came together to form a group that has gone down in history as the pinnacle of prog rock excess, and here we look at four of their best releases.

Emerson, Lake, and Palmer pose for a portrait in August 1971.
Left to right: Keyboardist Keith Emerson, singer, bassist and guitarist Greg Lake and drummer/percussionist Carl Palmer.

Following a warm up gig in Plymouth, ELP debuted before a crowd of half a million with a less than secret gig at 1970's Isle of Wight Festival. The new trio on the block quickly made their presence felt in the transatlantic LP charts. All three musicians were known and respected: keyboardist Keith Emerson had led classical-rock fusionists The Nice, bassist Greg Lake had been the voice of highly-rated progressive new boys King Crimson and Carl Palmer, recommended by Cream manager Robert Stigwood, had stoked the percussive fire underneath Arthur Brown.

There was common musical ground, but also compromises to be made. Palmer recalls Lake being into Simon and Garfunkel, but having an impressive classical record collection; as he told *Louder Sound* in 2016, 'Keith and I had this thing, that we really enjoyed classical music. I come from a really classical background, with my father being a professor of music and so on, and so Keith and I always used to rib each other, "Have you heard *this*?" and "Have you heard *that*?" We'd be talking about various pieces of music and something would come up, and I'd say, "I used to listen to that at home with my grandfather!" So there was a bit of synergy going on there straight away.'

> *'Certain things you learn through exposure. It's really the elements, which make up any artist. You really learn by example. You learn by influence. And some people have a huge impact on you, and that's how you become the artist you are.'*
>
> GREG LAKE

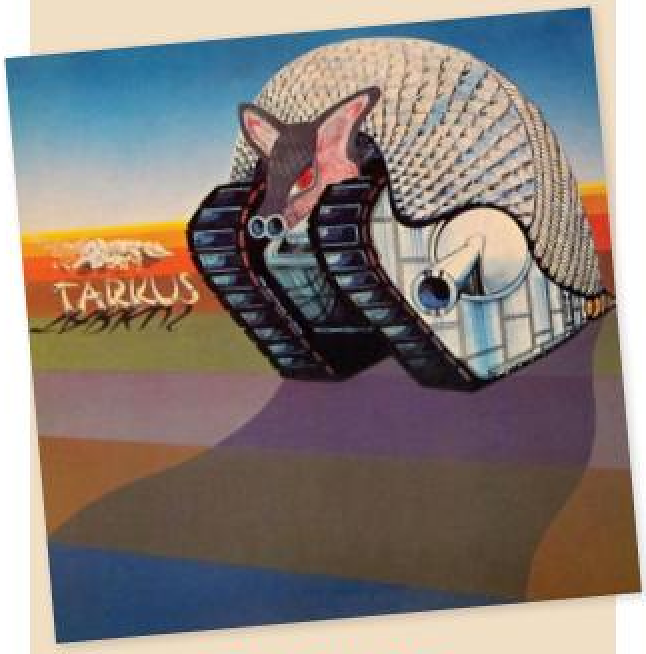
During early rehearsals at Island's Basing Street studios in June 1970 the group tackled Nice material like *Rondo* and *America*. King Crimson's *Schizoid Man* was quickly dropped as they put new songs together, with *Take a Pebble* the first to be tried. Recording commenced in July with Lake producing – a role he retained until the band's first break-up in 1979.

Palmer reflected later that their eponymous first album might have come too soon for them to really gel as a band. Certainly Side Two has a very 'solo' album feel to it but side one is a magnificent group effort. Emerson, Lake & Palmer was a dramatic opening statement, and more was soon to come.

TARKUS

Early 1971 was spent rehearsing and recording material for the second ELP album, which was be recorded hot on the heels of *Emerson, Lake & Palmer*. Released in June, *Tarkus* topped the British charts where its predecessor had 'only' made No. 4. An inventive gem of an album, *Tarkus* was the only ELP release to make it to No. 1 in the UK. The album also entered the Top 10 in the States, where the band were enjoying a burgeoning popularity.

After the praise accorded to their debut album, the pressure was on



TARKUS

ARTWORK & PACKAGING

The surreal artwork for *Tarkus* by English artist and graphic designer William Neal has become an iconic image, synonymous with the prog rock genre. It is unusual for the artwork to come before the concept of an album but Emerson, Lake and Palmer were so struck by the piece that this is what happened in this case.

Emerson has stated, 'To everyone, it represented what we were doing in that studio. The next day on my drive up from Sussex the imagery of the armadillo kept hitting me. It had to have a name. Something guttural. It had to begin with the letter "T" and end with a flourish. Tarka the Otter may have come into it, but this armadillo needed a science fiction kind of name that represented Charles Darwin's theory of evolution in reverse. Some mutilation of the species caused by radiation … Tarkus!'

The artwork really comes in to its own when the gatefold sleeve is opened. Spread over eleven panels is the story of Tarkus: from when he hatches out of an egg, to his defeat and retreat from battle with the Manticore. Neal uses the space masterfully and paints a picture of a land that is somehow both prehistoric and post-apocalyptic. Only in an ELP artwork would you find a mechanical pterodactyl.

Rarely has the artwork of a release so completely reflected the albums contents and the *Tarkus* sleeve is a minor masterpiece in its own right.

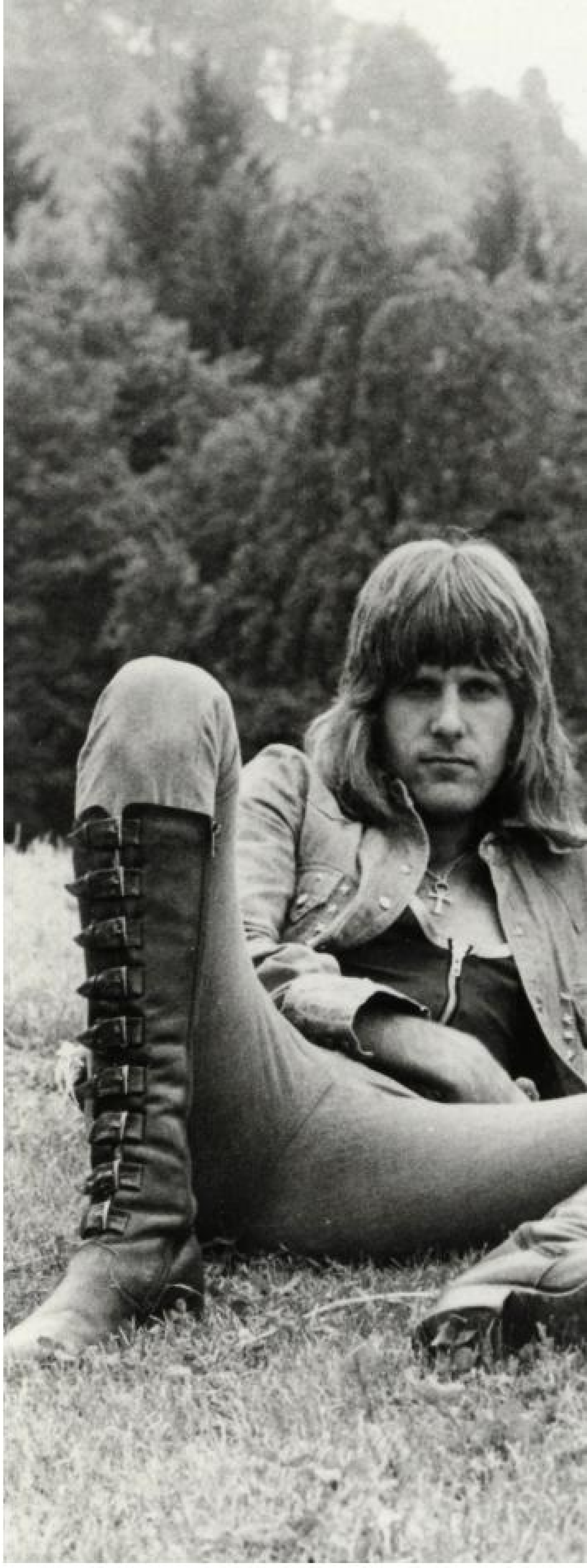
Emerson, Lake & Palmer to come up with something special. The concept of the album came from its stunning tank/armadillo sleeve art by student William Neal, whom the band met at Advision studios whilst he was touting some striking artwork around. At that stage, the music was just a group of disparate pieces – but when Emerson viewed the paintings he immediately related it to the music. The concept of *Tarkus* was born.

The now infamous 'Tarkus' not only inspired the album's construction, but also became the basis for a bizarre part of the band's stage show. The giant 'tankadillo' would roll on to stage and blast the audience with polystyrene snow. Unfortunately Tarkus' aim could be a little unpredictable and more than once Emerson found himself and his keyboard buried in the fake snow, prompting roadies to run on stage armed with vacuum cleaners.

The *Tarkus* album was completed in February 1971 and, Lake explained the title track's concept to *New Musical Express* stating, 'It's about the futility of conflict expressed in [the] context of soldiers and war. But it's broader than that. The words are about revolution that's gone, that has happened. Where has it got anybody? Nowhere.' Compared to the sixties mantra that music could change the world, this was rather downbeat stuff.

Emerson, as ever, looked at things in musical terms, and told *Contemporary Keyboard* his side of the story in 1977. 'I'm very aware of what Carl and Greg like to do,' he said, 'and in the case of *Tarkus*, Carl was very struck by different time signatures. He told me that he'd like to do something in five by four, so I said that I'd keep that in mind and started writing *Tarkus* from there. Greg wasn't too sure about it from the beginning. It was too weird. But he agreed to try it, and afterwards he loved it.'

The contrast to Emerson, Lake & Palmer's debut album was striking, and any remaining critics who thought they were 'The Nice Mark II' were blown away. One reviewer for *Stereo* remarked on *Tarkus*, '[There are] unusual time signatures abound, rapid tempos call up the musicians' fleetest fingering, and a slight but attractive jazz tinge colours the proceedings. It's hard to categorise, but it has a remarkable ability to mix trippy rock sounds with significant musical content. And that is not exactly what one finds in your run-of-the-mill rock recording.'



This was an album that played a major part in defining a new genre in music: progressive rock. For better or for worse, there would soon be an explosion of bands refusing to set limits on their musical goals.

The idea for the music on *Tarkus* came from an improvisation developed on tour during 1970. The original theme was by Alberto Ginastera, the Argentinean composer whose *Piano Concerto No. 1* was later adapted by Emerson as *Toccata*. He persuaded an initially sceptical Greg and Carl to try it, and the *Tarkus* suite was recorded in just six days. The gentle intro, which is partly Greg's voice on a tape loop, breaks and suddenly unleashes the band at full tilt.

The band divided *Tarkus* into seven sections, each given a letter of the alphabet. The first, *(A) Eruption*, was self-

Emerson, Lake, and Palmer in 1973.

'We manage to bounce ideas off one another. Every band fights, but at the end of the day, we're very positive about the way we fight. At least we come out with a result.' – Keith Emerson

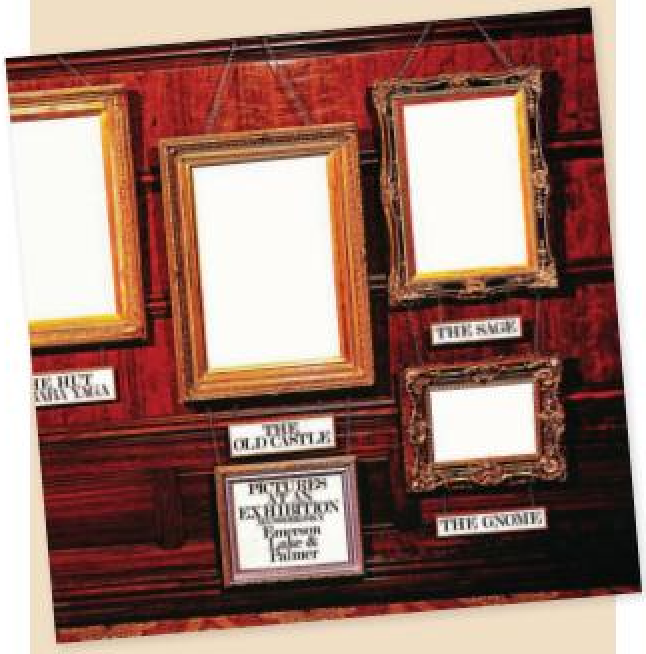
confessedly inspired by Frank Zappa and, in disjointed fashion, conveys the violent world that Tarkus – the tankadillo – is about to inhabit. Lake's lyrics are about the big theme of the day: the futility of conflict.

(B) Stones of Years was also released as a US single. In this part Lake asks the question 'Can't you see how stupid this all is?' Then it is back to instrumental mayhem with *(C) Iconoclast*. By the time of *(D) Mass*, the question had crystallised: 'Can't you see all the hypocrisy?' A whole cast of unsavoury characters is wheeled out like the sinful Pilgrim and the Cardinal of Grief. On *Mass* Emerson switched from organ to Moog with spectacular success. After dabbling with the synthesiser on the first album, he was now harnessing the instrument's full potential, but was careful not to overdo it and kept it subordinated to the Hammond.

Next to arrive is Tarkus's nemesis, *(E) Manticore*, an animal from Greek mythology with the head of a man, the quills of a porcupine and the tail of a scorpion. Manticore is fated to meet Tarkus on track *(F) The Battlefield*, where Lake asks the final crucial question: 'What have we gained?' Manticore wins the battle and puts Tarkus to flight. An often-overlooked aspect of *Tarkus* is that it contained more electric lead guitar from Lake, most notably in *Battlefield*, than on any other ELP album.

The final track, *(G) Aquatarkus*, saw Keith's Moog make a snorkel-like sound as Tarkus returns to the water where life originated. This backs up the assertion that Emerson has tended to see the story thorough Neal's paintings, whereas Lake understandably viewed the story through his lyrics. To Keith it was about a reversal of how life is supposed to have begun on the planet – a case of evolution in reverse after the final nuclear explosion.

Many commentators have pointed out that the Manticore is the only organic creature in the story, thus hinting at the inferiority of machines. That is not quite true, as Tarkus is said to have emerged from an egg, and therefore could also be thought of as organic. Other speculative suggestions included an analogy to the Vietnam War or even a Terminator-style plotline, but attempts to explain the story have found Keith and Greg still at variance with what it meant. Perhaps the fact that the number is so open to interpretation is all part of the appeal, as it affords the listener the chance to bestow whatever significance they please upon the lyrics.



PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

ARTWORK & PACKAGING

William Neal was also responsible for the artwork on Pictures at an Exhibition, though the difference in style from *Tarkus* is marked.

The cover depicted a series of paintings by Neal that had been hung at Hammersmith Town Hall as if in a gallery; the paintings were then photographed by Nigel Marlow and Keith Morris (a renowned rock photographer of the time).

Each painting was filled with ELP symbolism and was given the title of a piece from the album. Yet, these paintings appeared to be plain white on the album cover and were only revealed on the inner gatefold.

This is apparently with the exception of *Promenade*, which appears blank in both images, yet the original painting was embossed with a white dove.

Pictures at an Exhibition is a take on the work of Mussorgsky and the cover alludes to the fact that the composer was greatly inspired by an artist and architect called Viktor Hartmann. His work ranged from architectural sketches to bizarre ideas for costumes. The sketch of a chick costume that he created for the Trilby ballet looks more in line with something from *Tarkus*, showing a child in an egg suit with a chicken head and scaled eggs protruding. Perhaps the artworks of the two covers are not so far removed after all.

Greg Lake onstage in 1974.

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

With *Tarkus*, safely in the can, Emerson, Lake & Palmer set off on a UK tour in early March 1971. The band decided their next project would be a live album: *Pictures at an Exhibition*, a rocked-up version of Russian composer Modest Mussorgsky's classical work. ELP had premiered this number during the previous year's inaugural performance at the Isle of Wight Festival. The two stage-side cannon Emerson and Lake set off on that occasion were unfortunately not taken on tour with the group. This was partly because the cannons had been responsible for blowing an unsuspecting photographer off the stage and into the audience with the force of their blasts. 'We tried the cannons out in a field near Heathrow Airport,' Emerson later mused, 'They seemed harmless enough.' This was typical of the onstage madness that comprised an ELP performance, and there was plenty more to come.

When considering the live album, ELP had filmed a performance at London's Lyceum in December 1970, but felt the result was not up to their high musical standards (although, *The Pictures* section of the concert did eventually appear as part of a film called *Rock 'n' Roll All Over You*, and later as a DVD).

In light of this disappointment, ELP made another attempt on the 26 March 1971. At their own expense they brought their recording gear, and engineer Eddy Offord, to the Newcastle City Hall to capture a memorable evening. The resulting album was released at a budget price of one pound and forty-nine pence. This was in order to satisfy their record label that had originally wanted to give it away with *Tarkus* as a bonus disc. ELP proved right in holding out as the release shot straight into the UK Top 3.

Mixing rock and the classics, of course, was nothing new. Back in 1968, Keith Emerson's pre-ELP band The Nice had caused controversy with their assault on Leonard Bernstein's *America*, from the musical *West Side Story*. Mass outrage was sparked when Nice accompanied the number with a ceremonious burning of the American flag as a Vietnam protest. This sort of outrageous stage antic was one facet that Emerson brought to ELP, but another was his determination to master the Moog. The Moog was an innovation originally designed for studio use and one that many other bands disdained as 'not a real instrument'. Always an individualist Emerson was enthralled with the machine and it became a key part of the ELP sound.

Confused by ELP's take on classical music, the band's American label, Atlantic, wouldn't even release *Pictures* until the level of imports became overwhelming. At one point they even suggested releasing it on their classical

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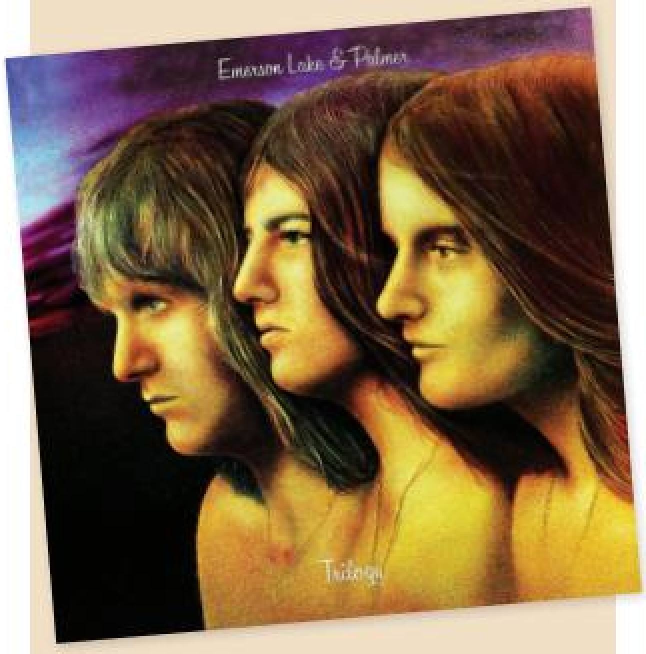


TRILOGY

ARTWORK & PACKAGING

The task of creating cover artwork fell to Storm Thorgerson from Hipgnosis. Hipgnosis were a huge name in the rock industry at the time, they became most famous for their work with Pink Floyd but also collaborated with such acts as Led Zeppelin, Genesis and notably, The Nice. Emerson had collaborated with Hipgnosis the year before trilogy's release, for the cover of The Nice's 1971 release *Elegy*. Keith believed the artwork to be 'the best album cover I have ever seen.' So it seems inevitable that he would want to revisit the collaboration on the design for *Trilogy*.

At the time it was rumoured that Salvador Dali had been commissioned for the piece, but the artwork never materialised. It was reported that this was due to his demand for an extortionate fee. Nonetheless, the opening track of the album was still named *The Endless Enigma*, after one of his paintings.

The idea of the florid triple-portrait front cover was to create a pre-Raphaelite effect, and was the first to feature the band member's faces. The image is striking, yet once again very different in style to anything ELP had used before. Each album brought a new evolution and distinct look.

The inside of the 12-inch gatefold redressed the balance of the moody cover with some humorous shots of the band at play in Epping Forest.

Carl Palmer in performance in 1974.

imprint rather than Cotillion, which the band resisted. Eventually Atlantic took notice as demand for the release grew. The New York DJ Scott Muni, an ELP champion, played both sides back to back on the radio station WNEW, which aided this demand substantially. As a result the album promptly shot to No. 10. History has varied with its verdict, the reviews ranged from the positive such as *Words & Music*: 'At the opening of the piece, the listener is treated to a promenade in a picture gallery … a walk through a hall lined with pictures, and the pace and beat of the music brings to mind a slow stroll through a place that is not without grandeur. This *Promenade* section of the record is pure Mussorgsky, rendered faithfully by ELP, and it is not until the next selection (a stop at the first exhibition picture, if you will) that Carl Palmer contributes his bit to *The Gnome*. From there on in, with the exception of *The Hut of Baba Yaga*, the boys help the old master along with their way-out electric sound and strange countermelodies superimposed on his delicate ones. For the most part they do a bang-up job of it …'

Some reviewers were less enthusiastic, as displayed in *Circus*: 'Classically-influenced rock is a relatively new phenomenon, but already it has resulted in some genuinely awful and pretentious "fusions", musical excursions which might have succeeded if the band members had a firmer grip on the works of the masters. Prime movers in the trend have been ELP, and while no one can quarrel with their knowledge of the classics, one can quite easily take issue with their ability to interpret a composer like Mussorgsky. It seems instead that Keith Emerson and Cohorts are more interested in borrowing the best parts of this highly complex work of art and bending them to suit their own needs, probably figuring that the majority of their audience would not be acquainted with Mussorgsky in the first place.'

Whatever the critic's take on the piece, the album certainly inspired many more bands to consider taking elements of classical music and merging them with their own rock-based ideas – a trend that continues to this day.

TRILOGY

Pictures at an Exhibition had signalled the end of the first phase of Emerson, Lake & Palmer. By the time it was released in November 1971, the band had already started to record their next album – *Trilogy*.

After two concept releases they returned to the song-based format of

'I was always playing the Hammond Organ back to front even during the days of The Nice, going back to 1968. Really what I was doing there was choosing notes at random and trying to make some sense of them, improvising back to front.' – Keith Emerson

their debut. But that didn't mean they had stopped innovating. *Trilogy*, Emerson proudly claimed was, 'an album with a vision, made by a band that had just discovered its identity.' The release reached No. 2 in the UK and No. 5 in the States, as well as an impressive No. 6 in Denmark. Unfortunately it was around this time that the press started to turn on the band. The old adage that 'you build them up and then you knock them down again' was never more evident, and *Trilogy* was the first ELP album that was really savaged by the British media. The reviews of the album did not stop at criticising the release and some actually launched a scathing attack on the band themselves. A prime example of this vitriol came from Robert Christgau, who wrote, 'The pomposities of *Tarkus* and the monstrosities of the Mussorgsky homage clinch it – these guys are as stupid as their most pretentious fans.'

Fortunately time has been kinder to *Trilogy* and the album has been a perennial hit that is far more popular with today's critics.

By the time *Trilogy* was released in the summer of 1972, Emerson, Lake & Palmer were one of the biggest bands in the world. Their brief tour of Japan showed that, when it came to pulling power, they were able to give established giants like Led Zeppelin a run for their money. 'The reigning rulers of classically-oriented rock have sustained their creativity for yet another monumental album destined to rule the FM airways for months to come,' drooled the US trade magazine *Billboard*.

> *'Philosophically, what I have learned is "to thy own self be true". That is the biggest lesson of all. Relax; music is fun. To many people take it to seriously because of the money involved.'*
>
> GREG LAKE

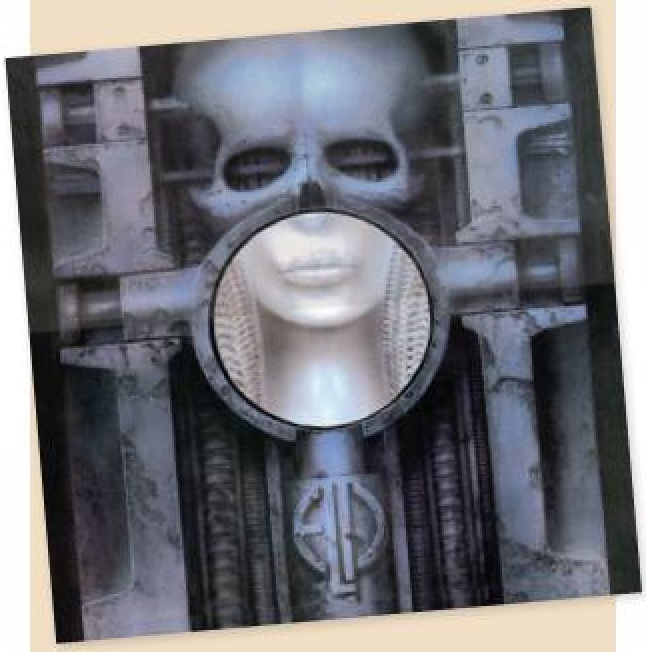
Trilogy did more to establish ELP as a major international band than any other album thus far. Yet, even though *Hoedown* and *From the Beginning* became perennial live favourites, the three major works on the album didn't really work together on stage. Thus, after the *Trilogy* tour they were attempted again in a trio format onstage.

BRAIN SALAD SURGERY

By mid 1972 ELP were one of the world's top concert draws, and it was one of Keith Emerson's main ambitions to create the complete theatrical experience. He and his bandmates spent much of 1973 trying to create such a show and, Greg Lake proudly told *New Musical Express*, that the new performance was 'going to take the concept of live appearances one step further. A lot better and more interesting than most are now.' A proscenium arch that required three articulated lorries to move it was just one of many innovations.

Recording sessions for an album that the band hoped would live up to the on-stage razzmatazz followed the touring. ELP invested more time in making *Brain Salad Surgery* than any other album to date. The release was scheduled for September, yet the album did not emerge until December 1973.

The sound on *Brain Salad Surgery* was markedly different as the band's favoured engineer Eddy Offord was now out of the picture. Instead of what *All*



BRAIN SALAD SURGERY

ARTWORK & PACKAGING

The artwork for this album was futuristic looking piece by the artist Hans Rudi Giger. Emerson, Lake and Palmer met with Giger whilst on tour in Zurich and were immediately taken with his artistic style. Emerson has recalled, 'It was dark and very foreboding, and for me it represented ELP's music.'

The artwork was done in Giger's signature monochromatic style, with a picture of a female android on the inside sleeve (based on his girlfriend Li Tobler). The outer sleeve layered this image with a cover showing a skull and the ELP logo engraved on a phallus. This had a circle in the middle showing woman's jaw and opened down to centre to reveal her full face.

This was a play on the album's title, which refers to fellatio, but understandably went down very poorly with the record company, who labelled it 'pornographic'. Giger refused to compromise his art by removing the phallus so ELP were forced to hire another artist to airbrush it out.

The sleeve nevertheless won Giger international fame: he went on to design the eponymous creature featured in Ridley Scott's 1979 science-fiction horror film *Alien*.

The original non-standard cover, which was split in two, showing the triptych in the middle was later used by Atlantic for the album's reissue in 1977.

Music Guide described as 'a lush, comfy finish particularly suited for living-room listening and the FM airwaves,' a new clarity was apparent. Speaking of the new sound, the iconoclastic US rock critic Robert Christgau showed his disdain for ELP once more in his *Record Guide* book. There he defined it somewhat crudely as 'a sound so crystalline you can hear the gism as it drips off the microphone' – truly a backhanded compliment if we ever heard one.

Released on their own Manticore record label, *Brain Salad Surgery* is an album Carl Palmer believes, when seen with its predecessor *Trilogy*, gives a complete picture of ELP at their peak. Advances in technology, both with keyboards and electronic drums, were giving the band assistance in realising their musical dreams more quickly and efficiently. This was clearly reflected in the album's relatively short recording time. The new approach paid off and *Brain Salad Surgery* reached No. 2 in Britain, and No. 11 in the States.

The charting in the US was typical for an ELP release, but one that the band may have found a little disappointing, as they had now began to think of the country as a spiritual home to their music. Greg Lake has since stated, 'I love touring in the United States. It's dramatically different wherever you go. North to south, you're going from snow to palm trees.

'Progressive music probably wouldn't even really exist if not for the people of the United States having picked up on it and nurtured it in the way they did. It really is an American form of music in the sense that it was nurtured here. So it belongs here. It has become part of the fabric of American musical culture.'

From November 1973 to September 1974, the band toured North America and Europe. This included a headline spot at the inaugural California Jam Festival on 6 April 1974 at the Ontario Motor Speedway in California. There was a crowd in attendance of 250,000 and their performance was broadcast across the US. The band's live shows exhibited an unorthodox mix of virtuoso musicianship and over-the-top performances that received much criticism but were sure to stun a crowd – the watching audience across America had never seen anything like this before. Their theatrics included Emerson playing a piano as it spun, suspended, end-over-end, Palmer playing on a rotating drum platform and a Hammond organ being thrown around the stage to create feedback. Emerson often used a knife, given to him by Lemmy Kilmister (who had roadied for The Nice) to attack the keys on the organ. Emerson used a large Moog modular synthesizer on stage but it was unreliable as heat affected the sound. The band carried almost forty tons of equipment for the tour. Performances from the band's 1973–74 tour were documented in the live album, *Welcome Back, My Friends, to the Show That Never Ends – Ladies and Gentlemen*. This was released in August 1974 as a triple LP. The album peaked at a predictable No. 5 in the UK and No. 4 in the US.

By 1974 Emerson, Lake & Palmer were one of the biggest bands in the world but they had wrung themselves dry in achieving that status. Classic albums like *Tarkus* and *Brain Salad Surgery* had cemented their reputation all over the world. Then, abruptly, after the *Welcome Back …* live album, they disappeared for two and a half years – a huge break in those days. Unfortunately, by the time they came back punk rock held sway. As with many bands of the time, they exited as giants and returned as dinosaurs.

Fortunately, whilst trends may change, creativity and individualism do not – ELP's back catalogue is a prime example of this. They inspired a huge shift in musical trends of the time and were pioneers of the classic/rock fusion. ELP's final performance took place during 2010 in London, and commemorated the 40th anniversary of the band. Although we sadly lost both Greg Lake and Keith Emerson in 2016, that they were still awing audiences after four decades is a testament to their mutual respect for each other and their music.

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FRANK ZAPPA

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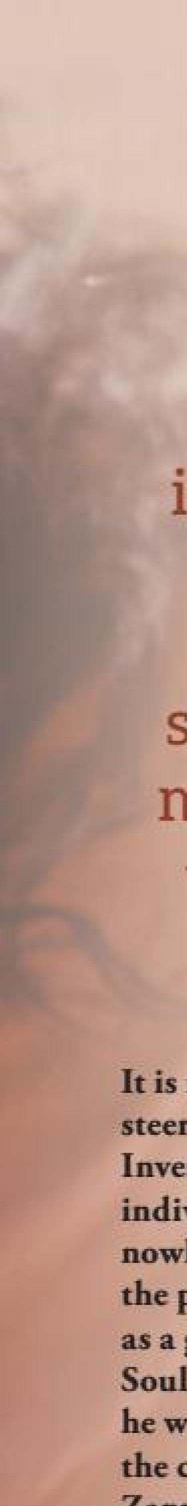

It is not only Zappa himself that steered the course of the Mothers of Invention. For all their talent and individuality, the band would have got nowhere if they were not marketed to the public. Zappa joined the Mothers as a guitarist in 1965 (then named the Soul Giants). Yet it was not long before he was helming the band, providing the creative vision and co-lead vocals. Zappa managed to convince the struggling band that the way to gain attention was by playing his music. He was proved correct in short order, when MGM producer Thomas Wilson witnessed the Mothers performing *The Watts Riot Song* (later titled *Trouble Every Day*) in Los Angeles. This was all the encouragement Tom required and he signed the band after one track, paying a hefty advance to keep the near-starving artists in business.

Wilson's part in the Frank Zappa story represents a remarkable step of faith. He was clearly a man who knew talent when he saw it. Wilson somehow managed to talk the company executives into stumping up an astronomical figure to get the band into the studio to begin work on an album. One of the inevitable provisos to their incredible generosity for an untried band with the reputation akin to that of a loose cannon was that the Mothers had to be renamed. There was a genuine fear of them being banned on air and television, or that the album would not be stocked in the stores for fear of causing offence. As anti-censorship as Zappa was, he agreed and the name the Mothers of Invention was decided upon.

So how did Tom Wilson, a record producer, manage to convince a giant like MGM to go out on a limb and invest a whopping $21,000 in an unknown band? (At the time the going rate at the time was nearer to a fifth of that sum.) And what exactly did he think when he heard the rest of the Mothers material when he finally got them into the studio? The answer is simple. Tom Wilson had been incredibly successful thus far. So successful that the company trusted his judgment explicitly, and when he brought the Mothers into their collective radar they just went along with it.

Despite some senior executive's doubts and concerns, Wilson got his way and the untapped genius of Frank Zappa was released into an unsuspecting world.

Wilson had built a career purely on impeccable judgment and an understanding of the artist. In understanding the artist he allowed complete freedom whilst still placing his own mark on the end result. Even though he was held is such high regard

Frank Zappa with his band the Mothers of Invention in London on 20 September 1967.

after his work with Bob Dylan, it was still a huge gamble to take responsibility for such as the huge Mothers budget. Despite his assurances to the MGM hierarchy, the Mothers were never going to be huge commercially. Wilson was aware of this, but knew he stood on the verge of the creation of another truly groundbreaking album. This knowledge made him all the more determined to get the release to the public.

As Zappa pointed out many times in interviews throughout the years Wilson quite literally staked both his job and his reputation on the project. In recognition of his contribution to the Mothers' catalogue he appears in the front row of the cover of the *Sgt. Pepper's* parody *We're Only in It for the Money*. Sadly he died in 1978 at the tragically young age of forty-seven but his contribution will always be there and confirm the view that he knew that he was making important music. He recognised he was making history, with this music representing a turning point. He also understood what Frank Zappa was trying to achieve.

In March 1966 the Mothers of Invention disappeared into the Sunset Highland Studio to start work on what would become their debut studio album *Freak Out!*.

Freak Out! is everything the cover says it is. Released on 27 June 1966, it is regarded by many as the first 'concept' album, which also created history by being one of the first double vinyl releases in rock history. In truth, the album only became a double because quite simply they had recorded too much material and were having difficulties trimming it down without compromising the relevance. In the end, the Mothers agreed to a smaller percentage cut if the album could be released as a double but at the same cost to the buying public.

The investment resulted in one of the most surrealistic, bizarre, overblown and commercially doomed albums of all time. It did however achieve two important points. Firstly, through the acres of attempted reviews that the album provoked, Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention became notoriously well known overnight. Secondly, it went on to gain a massive cult following as people began to catch on, at various speeds, in

'I never set out to be weird. It was always other people who called me weird.'
– Frank Zappa

an attempt to understand just what it was all about. Zappa must have sat back with a wry smile as he read reviews decrying it as drug induced craziness, gibberish and the whole enterprise as 'warped'.

The album had achieved precisely what it set out to do: provoke discussion. However, only a select few could apparently see the reason behind it. Sales were alarmingly bad for such an investment and the result was that the band's budget was slashed dramatically for their next effort.

Freak Out! remains as in-your-face today as it was on its release over forty years ago. That alone speaks volumes for just how ahead out of its time the album actually was. Even the cover provoked controversy and included a fictional letter from a Zappa inspired character called Suzy Creamcheese that read:

> *These Mothers is crazy. You can tell by their clothes. One guy wears beads and they all smell bad. We were gonna get them for a dance after the basketball game but my best pal warned me you can never tell how many will show up … sometimes the guy in the fur coat doesn't show up and sometimes he does show up only he brings a big bunch of crazy people with him and they dance all over the place. None of the kids at my school like these Mothers … specially since my teacher told us what the words to their songs meant.*
>
> *Sincerely forever,*
> *Suzy Creamcheese,*
> *Salt Lake City, Utah.*

'Suzy' also appeared on the album itself with singer Jeanne Vassoir playing the part. Looking back it is sometimes hard to realise the impact on the world of music *Freak Out!* had in 1966. It certainly left a lot of people, including respected reviewers, somewhat cold, bemused and at a loss as to exactly what it was all about. Others felt enraged, angry, or even horrified. Yet no one was left indifferent. It took the world a long time to finally catch up, but over thirty years later, *Freak Out!* was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame. In 2003, *Rolling Stone* magazine included it in their list of the 'Top 500 Greatest Albums Ever'.

All the way back in 1966, the Mothers were suddenly the topic of discussion. The young man who had written to his hero Edgard Varese was suddenly a known, and controversial, figure himself. Very quickly, Frank Zappa's name became synonymous with weirdness. The Mothers had propelled themselves from being a little known band performing cover songs to a notorious celebrity group. All this occurred in the short time following Zappa's arrival, and the band suddenly had a huge new following.

Frank Zappa had first crossed paths with the Soul Giants when he got to know Ray Collins. Zappa had, in truth, been actively searching for a band of musicians that could perform his music for some time. When Ray fell out with the guitarist it was Zappa that he turned to. Not happy playing covers with the band, Zappa quickly suggested that they should write and perform their own material and try to get a recording contract. Sax player Davy Coronado felt that was too risky and quit the band fearing that they would lose regular bookings. He preferred to concentrate on his regular day job. By the time the Mothers were working on *Freak Out!* the band's line-up was Zappa on vocals and guitar, Jimmy Carl Black on drums and vocals, Ray Collins on harmonica, tambourine, (and in pure Zappa style) 'sound effects'. There was also Roy Estrada on bass and soprano vocals. Added to the mix were numerous other musicians and instruments ranging from cellists to the French horn, trumpets, piano, tuba and clarinet. Hidden away among the credits was one 'Motorhead' Sherwood who was responsible for 'noises' and Kim Fowley on 'hypophone' (his mouth).

Record producer Fowley, of course, would later become a somewhat notorious and bizarre figure himself in a career which has seen him create the all girl punk band the Runaways and co-write songs with Kiss, Alice Cooper, Slade and Leon Russell.

Jim 'Motorhead' Sherwood's connection to the Mothers dated back to 1956. In high school he used to watch the strange figure of Frank Zappa sitting hunched on the lawn playing an old guitar. They finally met through a mutual love of blues records and had been friends ever since, playing together in their various bands including the Black Outs. He stayed with Frank through the Soul Giants and on into the Mothers. Jim would go to gigs at places like the Whiskey a Go Go in Los Angeles, helping set the equipment up and jamming with the band. It was through this work that Jim was asked to appear on *Freak Out!*, fulfilling the part of 'noises'.

In a revealing interview for the June 1968 edition of *Hit Parader* magazine Zappa explained the development of the Mothers in detail and gave further insight into what made him tick. He expressed his approval of independent business leading to capitalism (an unfashionably dirty word back in the heady days of mid sixties youth culture). He said,

'I had done a little motivational research. One of the laws of economics is that if there is a demand, somebody ought to supply that demand and they'll get rich. I composed a composite, gap-filling product that fills most of the gaps between so-called serious music and the so-called popular music. Next, I needed my own group to present this music to the public. The group that was to become the Mothers was working in the Broadside, a little bar in Pomona, California'.

'Art is making something out of nothing and selling it.' - Frank Zappa

Zappa took the Mothers through various stages of development including employing a female guitarist, Alice Stuart, before replacing her with Henry Vestine. Vestine came to notice later when he joined up with Bob 'The Bear' Hite in the ultimate boogie band Canned Heat. Vestine, who died in 1997, left the Mothers stating that he found the music to be getting 'stranger and stranger'. Blues guitarist Steve Mann, considered by many as one of the best on the West Coast, then joined for a while. But, in truth Zappa was still searching for exactly the right line up that could handle what he was trying to bring to the public.

Freak Out! is a raging argument put to some of the most extravagant and complex music of its time. It is also, in part, a technological landmark in the use of backward tape, multitracking, and enhancements. In the sixties these were developments that were right on the cutting edge of studio science. It shouts down the barriers and commands attention as it attacks numerous targets. It was intended, as Zappa himself says, to plug a gap that he felt existed in music. It sets out to both challenge and antagonise, and was designed as a shockwave so powerful it could have registered on the Richter scale. *Freak Out!* was intended to open the youth of the day's eyes to issues affecting them deeply and to get them to question their blind faith in the US flag and the 'God Bless America' mentality.

The inclusion of 'Suzy Creamcheese' underlines the whole concept as Zappa went about blowing late fifties suburban culture sky high. *Freak Out!* was delivered at a time when the Beatles, the biggest selling act on the planet at the time, were still writing commercial material and The Stones still hadn't quite become the self proclaimed 'Satanic Majesties'. It represented the Los Angeles music scene perfectly and set it aside from the fast developing hippy culture of San Francisco. There, freeform acid rock ruled, and could be found being performed by the likes of the Jefferson Airplane at any one of The Grateful Dead's acid tests.

The first track recorded for the album was *Any Way the Wind Blows*, which despite pleasing Zappa also disappointed him because he felt the mix was subpar. Up next was *Who Are the Brain Police?*. This was the track that really introduced the world to Frank Zappa. When Tom Wilson heard the band playing it in the studio he got straight on the telephone and argued for another investment. On hearing that he had been successful Zappa (never one to do things by halves) went away and scored a section that included a twenty-two piece orchestra. At last he was able to finally hear some of the music played by an orchestra, which up until that point only existed in his mind. Zappa lapped it up and worked flat out to try and achieve, what he considered to be, a time warping album. *Who Are the Brain Police?* includes a section of tape, introduced at the insistence of Zappa, which is either backwards or is, perhaps, from an altogether different recording. It was as if he had inserted a Jim Morrison-style 'wake up' call.

Motherly Love centred on the, then near taboo, subject of sex and teenage groupies. A further shot across the bows occurred with the track *Ritual Dance of the Child Killer* where 'Suzy Creamcheese' makes a sexually explicit appearance.

Despite being an overblown double-sided album there is not one track on it that doesn't attack, ridicule or at least comment on life. Zappa uses every groove of the vinyl to its utmost effect. As his ideas ran wild and he introduced an ever-growing cast of musicians causing the money to finally grow thin. For this reason the track *The Return of the Son of Monster Magnet* was included despite being largely unfinished and sounding a little short of the intended 'final' version.

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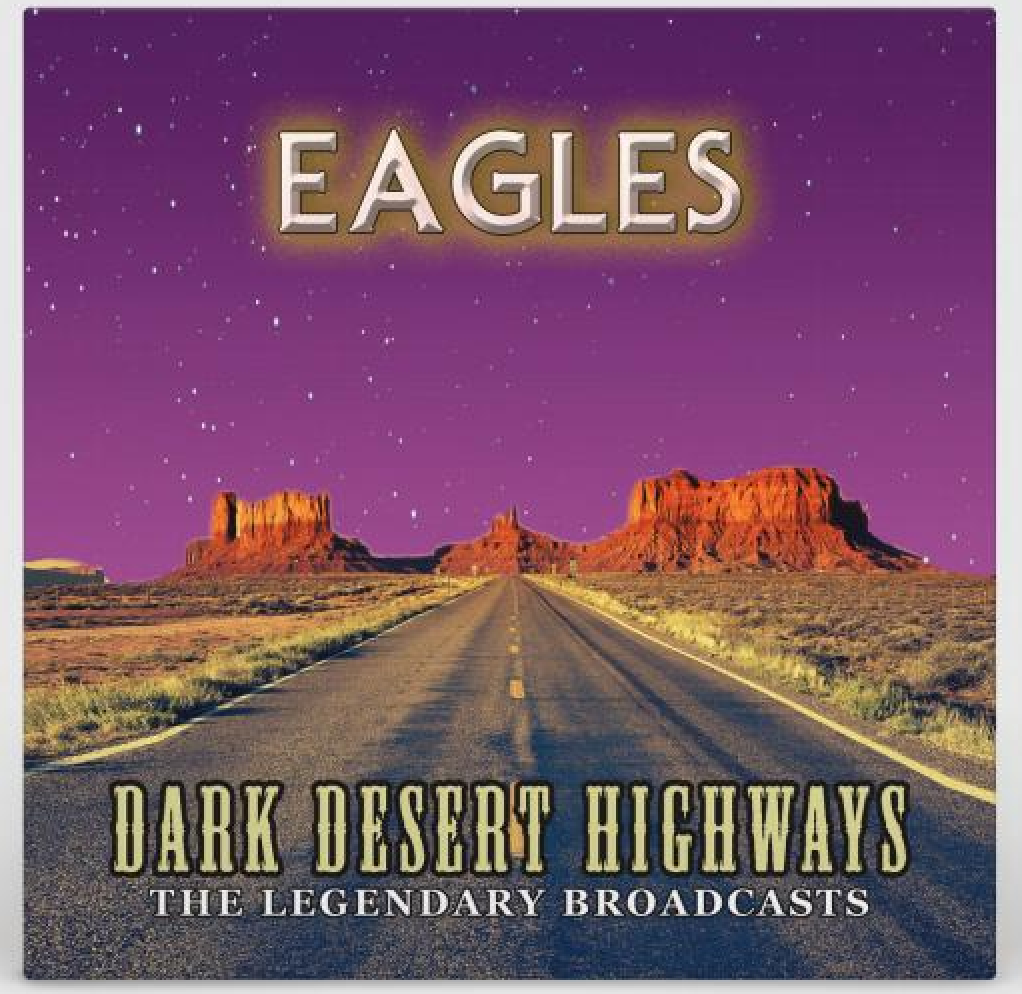

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'There is more stupidity than hydrogen in the universe, and it has a longer shelf life.' – Frank Zappa

Some eccentricities that did make it onto the album are Zappa shouting 'fuck' fed through a tape running at many times its normal speed. As well as a printed maps that were included in early versions of the album. These detailed *Freak Out!* hot spots in the L.A. area. A complete set is now highly collectable but at the time it caused controversy, particularly with the residents of one of the proclaimed hot spot locations, who quickly grew concerned as the freaks of the city descended to have a look and, well, freak out!

The album was never going to be easy listening; it was never intended to be. Reviewers, used to playing an album once through and hearing accessible music that they either liked or disliked, simply couldn't get it into any sort of artistic context. The album stalled at No. 130 in the Billboard Charts and its relative commercial failure must have resulted in some interesting meetings between Tom Wilson and the MGM executives.

Never one to sit back and pause for breath Zappa pushed on. Wherever there was a boundary is where you would find him – pushing at it. In the process he would run rings around many well-intentioned interviewers, as he became the most visible element of the Mothers of Invention. Once *Freak Out!* had freaked us out, Frank Zappa's career moved forward at an astonishing speed, yet despite the apparent lunacy of it all, he was never really out of control for a moment.

This prolific time in music history found the Beatles putting the finishing touches to *Sgt. Pepper's* and Brian Wilson was literally driving himself crazy trying to continue where *Pet Sounds* had left off. Whereas, Frank Zappa was busy as ever, working on a follow up to *Freak Out!* MGM, concerned over sales, had cut the budget dramatically. Guitarist Elliot Ingber was also no longer available for the project, having defected to work with Zappa's old time friend, Captain Beefheart. (He called himself 'Winged Eel Fingerling' on their album appearances – a very fetching name indeed.)

There are conflicting accounts available saying Ingber had been fired by the increasingly controlling Zappa over his growing pot use, but the issue has never been definitively settled.

Zappa, meanwhile, had added several more quality musicians to his line-up. These, he deemed capable of keeping up with the time changes and taking his music out even further into the bizarre, albeit in a structured way. Among them

Frank Zappa on the set of the 1968 satirical film *Head* starring the Monkees.

was Don Preston who arrived to play the keyboard.

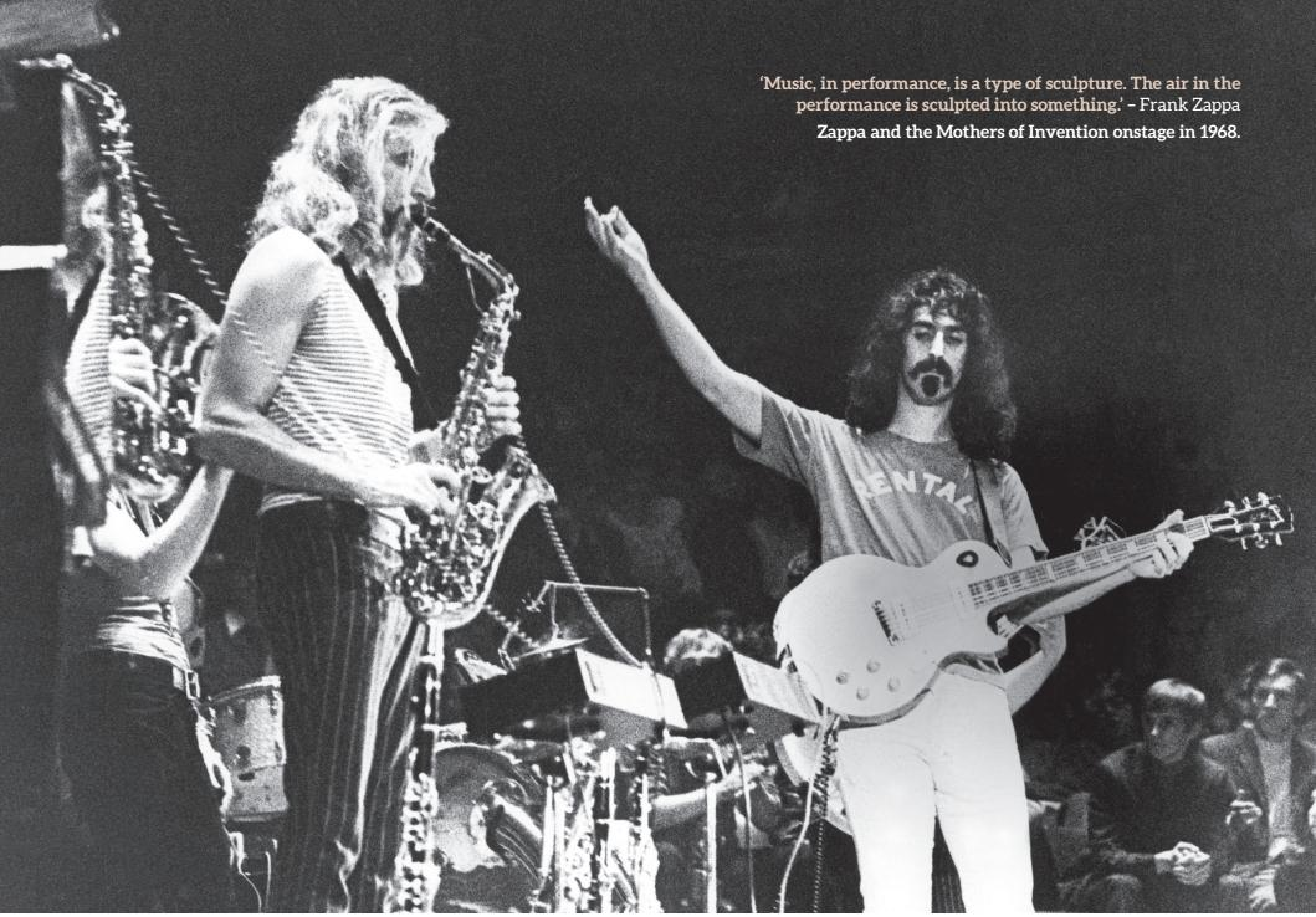
Preston was classically aware, as his father was a composer for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. He had introduced Don to influences similar to those that Zappa had been mesmerised by. Also introduced was drummer Billy Mundi, a keen musician who could read complicated musical scores and cope with the myriad of time changes Zappa employed. It was vital that Zappa had musicians of high quality and background along with him. Firstly they understood, often without too much explanation, where he was coming from and were aware of the musical ideas he was trying to convey. Finally, they had the skill to pull it off.

By this time Zappa had moved in with Pamela Zarubica whose place on Kirkwood Avenue was close to the epicentre of 'freakdom' itself, and he was truly immersing himself in the lifestyle and culture of the movement.

There was a crossover between San Francisco in the North and LA with Crosby, Stills and Nash, being regular visitors to Elektra Records' Barry Freidman's house. Such luminaries as Janis Joplin, Neil Young, the Doors, and Warren Zevon joined them, and tales of wild drug filled orgies circulated. Quickly Freidman's place became the place to be in the city, and from all the partying, some of the most important musical alliances of the time developed. A village rivalling anything that San Francisco's Haight area had to offer quickly developed and band residents included such acts as Love, the Doors, and the Byrds.

Despite being an integral part of the scene, Zappa's anti-drug stance made him very much an outsider. Nevertheless this, the rag tag collection of musicians, groupies, and attached freaks would gather to listen to and create music. One of the most popular records played at the time amongst the musicians and one that is still cited on Graham Nash's own website all these years later as being essential listening, was *Music of Bulgaria*. Clearly there were many musical paths evolving and within those journeys are some weird and wonderful influences.

Zappa wasn't alone in his appreciation of Varese and up north in San Francisco Phil Lesh of The Grateful Dead was also a keen promoter of the avant-garde musical genius. Lesh came to take 'freeform' to a whole new level and beyond with The Grateful Dead, who became the



'Music, in performance, is a type of sculpture. The air in the performance is sculpted into something.' – Frank Zappa

Zappa and the Mothers of Invention onstage in 1968.

archetypal Frisco band in the process. Ray Manzarek's classical music pedigree is blindingly obvious to anyone listening to his work with the Doors. Meanwhile Crosby, Stills and Nash were taking the harmonies and structure of *Music of Bulgaria* away with them, and went on to produce some of the most accessible music of the Woodstock age.

Frank Zappa absorbed these influences and used them to go even further out on a limb. As abstract and surreal as his music may have been, it originated from some of the same sources. Whilst the likes of Crosby, Stills and Nash pronounced peace and love, believing that through the message and the movement they could change the world; Zappa remained cynically confrontational. As much as he remained opposed to the drug culture that fuelled most of both L.A. Canyon and the San Francisco scenes, his house and studio were filled with freaks, girls, groupies, hookers and just about every weirdo from the city.

Keen to indulge in the free love of the era, it was drugs that left him cold. The thought of losing control was abhorrent to Zappa. As his mind raced with musical ideas he resisted the temptation to expand them any further, feeling that anything drugs could offer was superfluous. Zappa wanted to spend his time writing and producing – such as working with Tom Wilson with the Animals, arranging *All Night Long* and *The Other Side of This Life* – as well as performing and recording.

Provoking Zappa was as easy as describing his music as drug induced or psychedelic. It was a sure fire way to gain a reaction. He spoke to *Hit Parader* in 1968, and stated, **'I asked a night club owner what psychedelic music was. "It's loud out of tune crazy music, you can't understand it" he told me. Our music is logical.'**

This was a definite indication of just how strong an influence Zappa's classically attuned musical development had been. He was passionate about trying to introduce that concept into the genre he now found himself part of. It was a further illustration of him **'plugging the gap between so called serious and popular music.**

'Our spontaneous outbursts are planned. They have to be. If you take an eight-piece band and not direct them you'll have psychedelic music. We rehearse an average of twelve hours on each song. We learn them in sections. There's the front part, the interlude A, interlude B and so forth, and the band has to remember certain cues for each section. Each set that we do is conceived of as one continuous piece of music, like an opera. Even the dialogue between numbers is part of it. Some of our sets run to an hour-and-a-half when we get carried away. That's about opera length.'

> **'You can't always write a chord ugly enough to say what you want to say, so sometimes you have to rely on a giraffe filled with whipped cream.'**
>
> Frank Zappa

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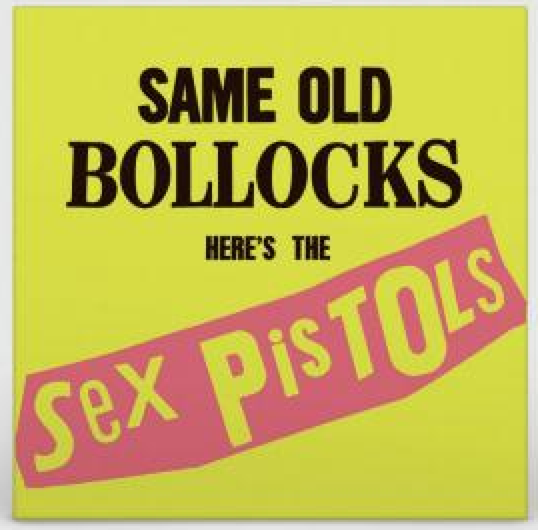
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Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention in 1970.

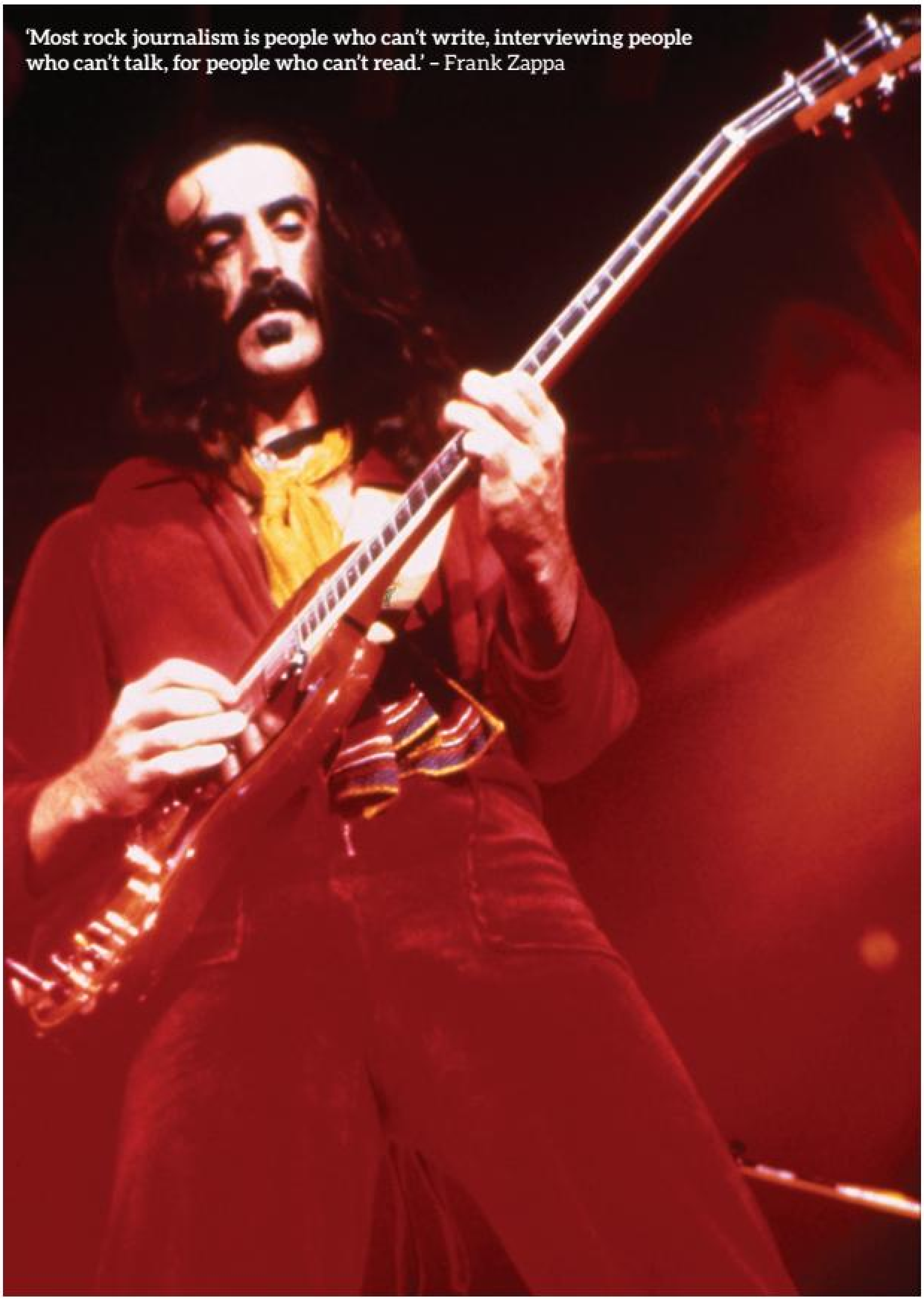
These quotes date back to before the rock opera had been invented and underline just how advanced Zappa's thinking was. Despite constantly studying and perfecting studio technique, the limitations of the technology available at the time no doubt held back some of his more expansive plans. Having said that, it also pushed him into areas that might not have evolved given today's technological advances. Zappa had to come up with a way of expressing the sounds developing in his mind. This proved a constant challenge that pushed his boundaries whilst simultaneously pushing those of his team as well.

After *Freak Out!* came *Absolutely Free* in April 1967. It was memorable in that it introduced us to Zappa – the guitarist, particularly on *Invocation & Ritual Dance of the Young Pumpkin*. It also included the melodic *Call Any Vegetable* and dedicated the whole of Side Two to a piece called *The Mothers of Invention American Pageant*. It's here that Zappa lashes into American society, whilst producing sections such as *Brown Shoes Don't Make It*, which ranks as one of his all time greats. It was certainly way ahead of its time and saw Zappa exploring the composition of sound, splicing countless sections of tape together to form a whole; producing an avant-garde masterpiece. It was the very definition of controversial and to make the album's concept clear Zappa included the phrase 'war means work for everyone' on the cover and a huge mushroom cloud. It was a little too provocative for the label, which released a less dramatically confrontational version.

At this point, it needs to be said that it is impossible to go through each and every Zappa album in any detail here. We must try and distil the list down to his most influential, controversial, and innovative works. Brave works which, when put into practice, startle and disorient the listener. The big question is just where does Zappa fit into modern music? As we have seen already, he is impossible to pigeonhole.

If it is form one chooses to look at, approaching it from a purely musical perspective, then the following may just be true. In the case of other, infinitely accessible artists, it is possible to choose one album over another. Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon* over, let's say, *Animals* or *Led Zeppelin II* over *Houses of the Holy* maybe. The problem is that these are personal opinions and Zappa's music provokes entirely different responses in every listener.

Therefore the following appraisal is based on albums that represent, more than others, insights into Frank



'Most rock journalism is people who can't write, interviewing people who can't talk, for people who can't read.' – Frank Zappa

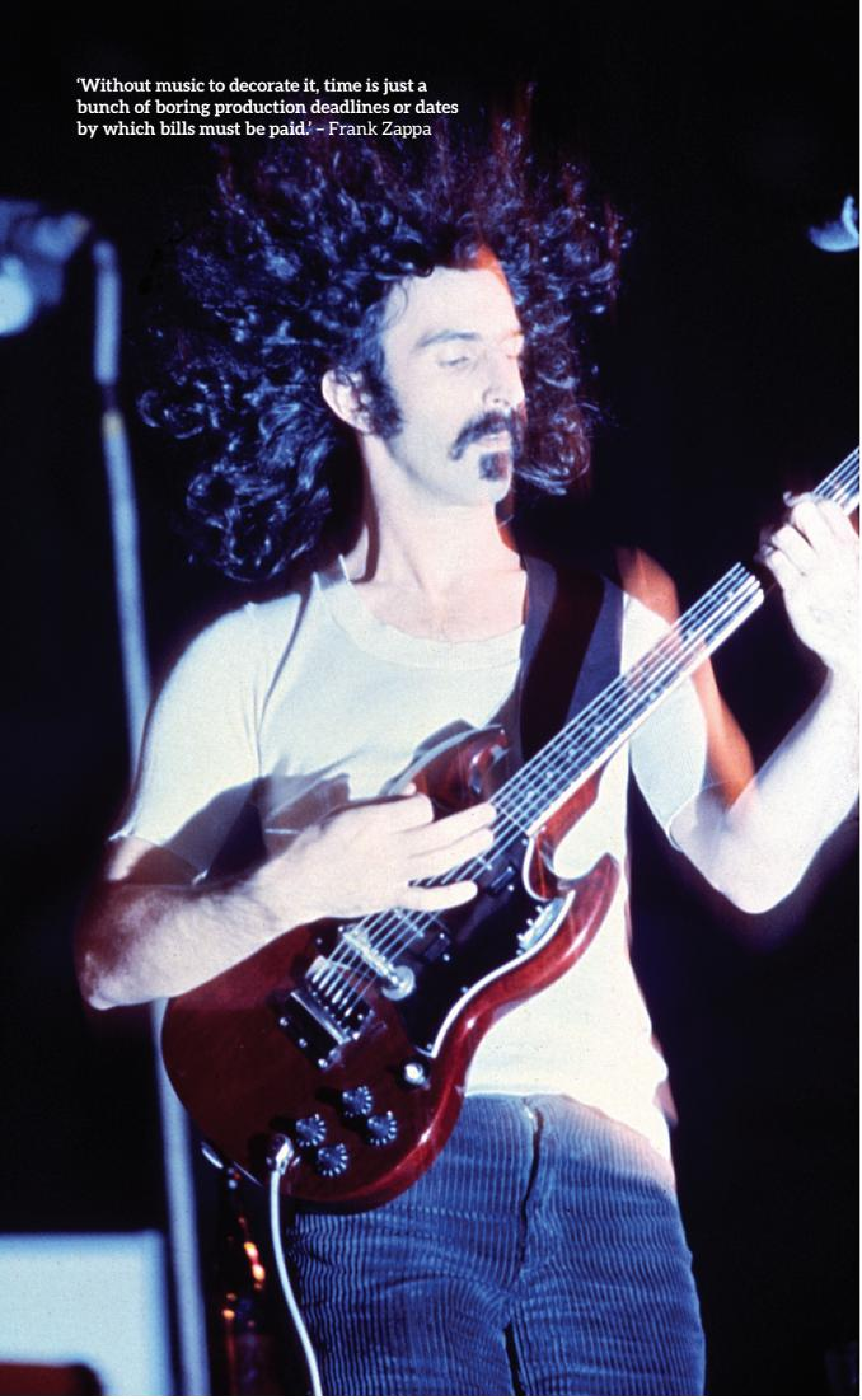
Zappa. They represent some of the most revealing moments in his eventful life, rather than anything based on personal choice, commercial success or musical importance. The first four albums represent such a formative time in the life of Zappa that they cannot be ignored. They shaped and guided every subsequent project that he produced, and therefore it is those that we consider here.

One of the luxuries of Zappa's music is that they can be revisited numerous times over a long period and result in new discoveries with each listen. Somehow he achieved a position of writing and producing music that doesn't become tired. Some people are provoked to anger whilst others are amused. It can remain inaccessible like a thick fog to some, whilst others go to great lengths to dissect every note, phrase and timing. Music that can do this is, despite any personal differences you may have, is art in its highest form. To deliberately set out to paint a picture that provokes different, yet equally valid responses depending on the person and situation, is the essence of artistic genius. To write music and achieve this effect is what Frank Zappa set out and managed to do.

So where do we go after *Freak Out!*? Privately Zappa had met his future partner Gail Sloatman. It was a relationship that lasted the rest of his life. He had met Gail when she had arrived at L.A. Airport with his then-partner Pamela. They didn't get together until a while later. Gail had lived in London with a flatmate that worked for Kit Lambert and Chris Stamp, the managers of The Who. This introduced Gail to the vibrant music scene in London before she moved on to New York and from there Los Angeles. She became an enthusiastic groupie by her own admission and mixed with bands such as the Byrds and the Beach Boys.

In the process, she entered into a long-term relationship with the troubled Brian Wilson. When she moved to Los Angeles, she met and lived with the record producer Kim Fowley and began to frequent the same circles as Zappa. She described Zappa as 'probably one of the grubbiest creatures I'd ever seen' but the attraction was sealed and they became a couple, with Gail often making reference to Zappa's magnetism and power. Pretty soon Gail moved in and Frank moved on.

Certainly there were moments in the first half of the seventies when Zappa almost became commercially viable and two of his albums, *Zoot Allures* and *Sheik Yerbouti*, are perhaps among his better known works. Remarkably though 1976's *Zoot Allures* was Zappa's twenty-



'Without music to decorate it, time is just a bunch of boring production deadlines or dates by which bills must be paid.' – Frank Zappa

first released work in just ten years. An incredible feat that underlines his driven passion to work almost without taking breath.

After *Absolutely Free* (which included the vitriolic *Plastic People*, in which Zappa refers to the LAPD as Nazis) we have *Lumpy Gravy*. A fourth album followed this, the comically titled *We're Only in It for the Money*. *Absolutely Free* reached a respectable No. 41 in the charts but to many at the record label it was the only really respectable thing about the album. Further controversy over some of the lyrics and generally scathing reviews followed. Production was even held up while MGM executives discussed some allegedly obscene lyrics at length.

Fortunately it was not all gloom, and during a week's residency on the East Coast of New York, the band received a positive review from the *New York Times* critic Robert Shelton. He really did 'get it' and saw the references to the likes of Stravinsky and Varese in a lot of what the Mothers were doing. Shelton had already carved out some degree of immortality for himself by the 'discovery' of Bob Dylan, and wrote the rave reviews that helped launch his career beyond Greenwich Village.

This time spent in New York was also notable for the meeting between Frank Zappa and the world's greatest living artist at the time Salvador Dali. Dali was so impressed by Zappa's strange looks and his subsequent meeting with the musician, that he dropped his plans and followed him to the rehearsal studio.

Unfortunately management of the studio managed to mess up a chance to bring together two of the most individual thinkers of any generation by refusing Zappa entry because of some small-minded dispute. What would and could have come out of that partnership can only now be reached through the limits of our imagination. The actions of the management here were an act typical of what Zappa was busy attacking, lampooning and ridiculing in his work. The lost chance to create with Dali cut him deeply, and it was a wrong that Zappa brooded over for decades.

Lumpy Gravy, released in May 1968, was one of Zappa's personal favourites. This was a work that he revisited at the end of his life with his intended masterpiece *Civilisation III*. The album came about when he was commissioned by Capitol Records to write something orchestral, and was given a budget of around $40,000. It was written over an eleven-day period in February 1967, whilst he and Gail were effectively being evicted from their home. They set up temporarily at the Tropicana Motel on Santa Monica Boulevard. It proved to be one of the most challenging exercises of his career and possibly explains his fondness for the finished article. The first problem was there was no room at the motel for his piano. That meant that the music remained, once again, frustratingly contained within his head. Secondly, because of time constraints he had to work around the clock to get it into the right shape. When the album was finally recorded Zappa used a group of fifty musicians who he labelled 'The Abnuceals Emuukha Electric Symphony Orchestra and Chorus'. Legal wranglings ensued between MGM (to whom Zappa was signed) and Capitol who had commissioned the album. Due to this, the album's release was delayed by nearly a year during which time Zappa added and tweaked several sections.

As if controlling a fifty-piece set up and trying to arrange the album wasn't enough of a challenge, Zappa had already begun work on what would become *We're*

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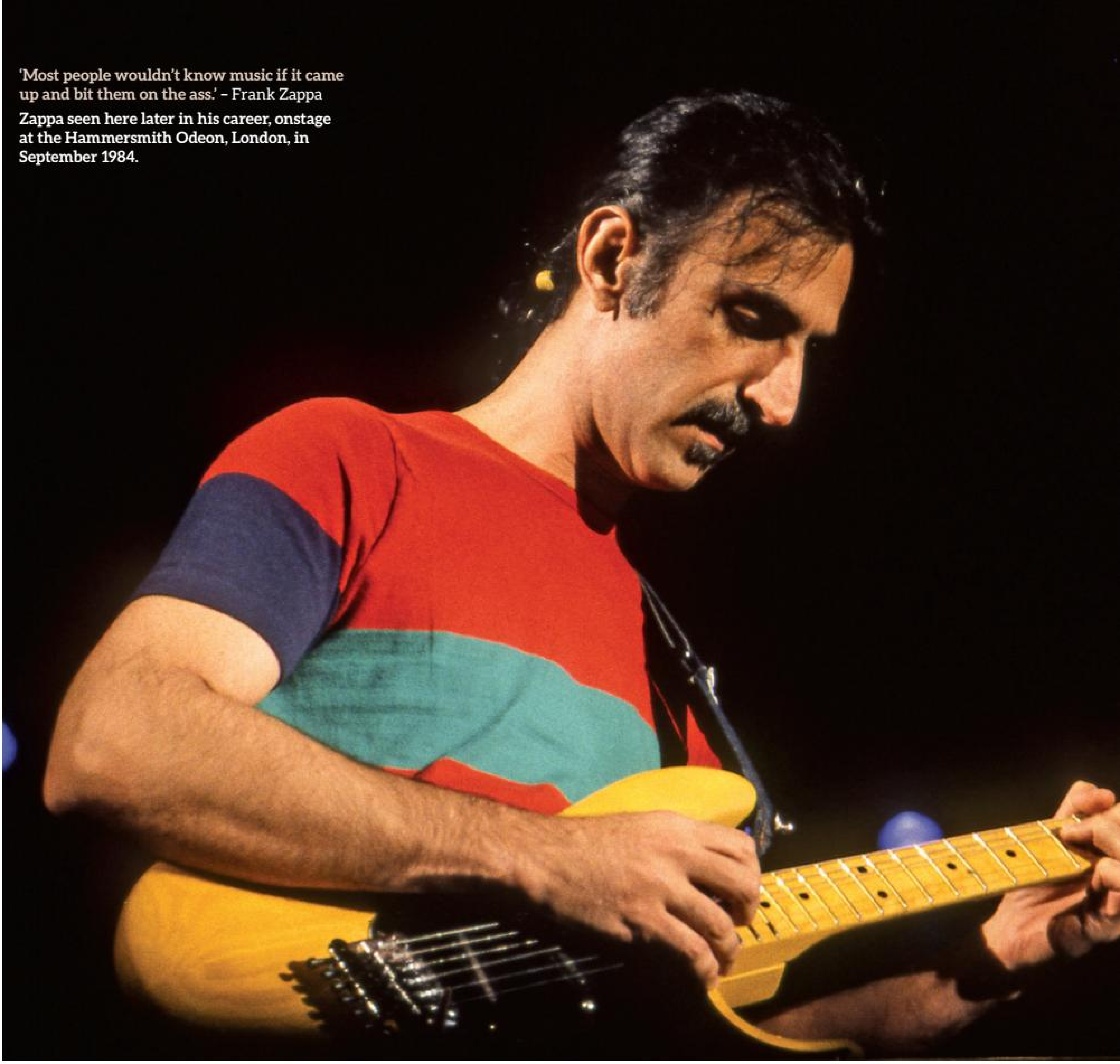

'Most people wouldn't know music if it came up and bit them on the ass.' – Frank Zappa

Zappa seen here later in his career, onstage at the Hammersmith Odeon, London, in September 1984.

Only in It for the Money and had recorded several ideas and parts that would later appear on that album. Before finishing that project, he decided to move both Gail and himself to New York. There they lived temporarily at the Hotel Van Rensselaer on East 11th Street from March 1967. Gail was pregnant and money was almost non-existent. This was largely because once again Zappa had gone against the grain. At a time when many of his fellow west coast musicians were moving on to the summer of love, he had moved to the opposite coast and the very different New York scene. From there the couple moved to an apartment in Thompson Street where the illustrious illustrator Cal Schenkel was a frequent visitor if not a resident. It was Cal who would produce the cover of *We're Only in It for the Money*.

In 1967 the Mothers enjoyed a residency at The Garrick in a show entitled *Absolutely Free* (originally known as *Pigs and Repugnant*). During this performance, the audience was regularly subjected to insults, dragged up on stage to 'perform' and women were made to dance. The show featured a stuffed giraffe that sprayed whipped cream from its rear at participants and audience members became a regular feature as the mayhem developed. One night's performance involved a controversial occurrence starring three marines, who, encouraged by Zappa, mutilated a plastic doll, which he introduced as a 'gook baby' during the set. It was art in its most extreme and, often unsubtle form, which aroused widespread responses. Typically, these were from both ends of the scale.

Zappa reacted against the type of person he perceived to attend his show, which made up a large part of the audience. He described them as shorthaired pseudo-intellectuals who only came along to see the latest controversial show in town. Many were dragged up on to the stage and made to recite, sing or perform a number. No two nights were the same as the mind of Frank Zappa explored the excesses his music travelled to in a theatrical setting.

It was the ultimate challenge for the band, who proved their musical worth by keeping pace, literally, with whatever bizarre development unfolded. To help this along, Zappa developed a series of hand signals that told the band which block to drop in at what time. It's fair to say that some of his most remarkable live performances happened at The Garrick.

During the residency Frank and Gail moved into another apartment, this time in Charles Street. Despite being relatively settled, Zappa was still enjoying the attentions of the many young teenage groupies that were in and around the New York music scene. He also remained a focal point for visiting musicians and apparently even spent one night with a very drunk Janis Joplin at the infamous Chelsea Hotel.

Meanwhile work was progressing on *We're Only in It for the Money*. Zappa had given Schenkel the basic plan for the album's cover, a parody of *Sgt. Pepper's*. He even approached Paul McCartney during a visit to London to ask for permission to use the imagery. When the design was finalised Jimi Hendrix and Tom Wilson were both invited to appear in the now-famous picture. Gail was also included, looking heavily pregnant, with the artist Schenkel seen sitting at her feet. Zappa didn't get it all his own way, and despite insisting on a bust of Varese being included, he had to make do with Beethoven when one couldn't be found. Shortly after Frank and Gail became the Zappas when they married at New York City Hall. As he left for the short trip to London, he agreed on a name for the baby with Gail, and on 28 September 1967 their daughter was born. She was named Moon Unit Zappa.

Tensions among the Mothers were slowly rising and nearly came to a head during the London trip. Zappa insisted on answering every question thrown at the band during interviews and also on staying at better hotels from the rest of the group. During his time there, he met Pete Townshend from The Who, Cream, Pink Floyd, as well as Jimi Hendrix and Marc Bolan, who both knew of Zappa from *Freak Out!*.

The Mothers then played an unlikely concert in the Royal Albert Hall during which Don Preston played the famous and prized organ to the amazed audience. The reviews were so good that Zappa became a bigger star in England than back in the States, where his following was split between the two very different coasts.

From London, Zappa returned to New York to record *We're Only in It for the Money* and in typical workaholic style put the finishing touches to *Lumpy Gravy*. He experimented in recorded conversation as elements of musical structure and many of these were stored away on sections of tape that only re-emerged much later in his career. One of the voices included on the re-workings of *Lumpy Gravy* was Eric Clapton, who is heard exclaiming 'God, it's God, I see God!'

As Zappa's fame increased, so did requests for interviews and television appearances. These included a slot on *The Monkees* where Zappa took the part of Mike Nesmith, complete with woolly hat, in an episode called *The Monkees Blow Their Minds*. The filming resulted in an unexpected mutual respect, and Zappa approached Micky Dolenz to drum for him later in his career. The Monkees in turn got Zappa to appear in their ill-fated, yet brave, film *Head*, where he is seen leading a massive talking bull.

Zappa raced through numerous projects in this period such as the score for the film *Uncle Meat*. He worked prolifically, holing himself up in the studio recording sections or parts of ideas that surfaced only years later.

Hidden away, at first, among these sessions was the foundation of *Cruising with Ruben & the Jets* but before that appeared, *We're Only in It for the Money* finally emerged. It was released nearly a year behind the album it set out to parody. It is a remarkable work and even now can evoke new experiences when played after countless listenings. It remains one of Frank Zappa's most 'important' works. On *We're Only in It for the Money* he introduces cleverly sown sections of tape and unique studio techniques. Zappa parodies the whole music business, whilst setting a scene containing many dark lyrics, which challenge the listener to address some pretty uncomfortable subject matters. Right wing militarism is centre stage, and the Bible belt anti-sex brigade are equally attacked. The falsity of American suburban bliss is also highlighted. It was a theme that Zappa verbalised throughout many interviews and shows, the bookings for which were on the increase. During this time the Mothers also played major venues in Boston, Miami, Chicago, and Toronto.

In amongst all this activity the Zappas, complete with Moon Unit, moved back West from New York and settled at the Tom Mix ranch. This marked a new chapter in Zappa's remarkable life and is where we will leave him. Such was the complexity of his character and artistry that we could list myriad other stories and projects. Despite his premature death in 1993, Zappa's legacy has continued on indefinitely. He is without doubt one of the most unique creative minds that rock has ever witnessed, and his wild ideas are still causing listeners to 'freak out' to this day.

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BON JOVI

Slippery When Wet

The New Jersey quintet Bon Jovi have been entertaining a diverse demographic of music listeners for decades. Their worldwide success can be attributed to their excellent, memorable songs; their telegenic appearance; and their eerie ability to adapt their look and sound to the times. Here we hear from Jon Bon Jovi himself about the road to releasing the 1986 smash hit *Slippery When Wet*.

The story of Bon Jovi is one of chameleon-like adaptation to stay one step ahead of the merciless wheel of fashion. Jon – whose style has always presaged that of his band – began his career in the 1970s working class New Jersey uniform of denim and straggled mullet. He then evolved into a slightly cringeworthy vision of poodle-perm, make-up, leather trenchcoat and exposed chest hair. However, in the mid-80s this look was de rigueur for any pop-metal act worth its salt, and the band had the last laugh when they reaped the commercial rewards.

Once again, the band marked themselves out as true survivors at the start of the 1990s by reinventing their look completely. Bon Jovi had ended the previous decade as hair-metallers of the most laughable order, even if their hits happened to sell rather more than those of their contemporaries such as Europe, Cinderella, Poison and the rest.

Of the band's early image, Jon recalled, **'I think it was the first record where we just looked like what we are and it wasn't working, so we thought, "Oh man, we've gotta be like those LA bands and dress like your little sister dresses." So we did, and then thought, "Oh, man, this is weird, if we went back to a bar in New Jersey we'd get our asses kicked in." So we got rid of that shit.'**

All of their planet-bothering success was a long off back in 1982, when the twenty-year-old Jon Francis Bongiovi (born 1962) was attempting to make it as a rock singer.

> *'I was just another long-haired teenage kid with visions of grandeur, strumming a tennis racket or a broom in front of his bedroom mirror.'*
>
> JON BON JOVI

'By the time I was fourteen, music was everything to me. It wasn't up for discussion. Luckily my parents supported me. They said, "If you're gonna do it, do it." Even when I was sixteen and playing in bars, they were OK with it. At least they always knew where I was.

'My first concert was Rush, Heart and the Doobie Brothers at a high school in 1975. It was overwhelming. I was only thirteen at the time. By 1977 I was committed. I'd gone to a couple of shows and seen what it was all about. I'd seen Bruce [Springsteen], I saw Southside Johnny & the Asbury Jukes in New Jersey, I saw Kiss at Madison Square Garden. I saw shows that were wild, but I never thought that I would be able to do it on that scale or go way beyond that. I wanted to be an Asbury Juke and they only headlined 3,000-seaters. They never got to be really big or headline [Madison Square] Garden … So I never dreamed of places like that. It's pretty amazing when you stop to think about where you are in the world. I never dreamed of it as a kid. I tell people now, I couldn't have made up lies like this! It's way beyond anything I ever dreamt of.

'Tom Waits was a huge influence, thanks to his cinematic approach to songwriting. I try to draw a lot

ERSEY GIRLS

Jon Bon Jovi in performance at the Monsters of Rock festival, Castle Donington, on 22 August 1987.

from him. He’s just so very good. Elvis Costello was another, and early storytellers like Paul Simon. Elton John was a big influence when I was a kid wanting to get into the business, because of *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* and *Caribou* as well as, you know, *Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy*. You get to those lyrics and go, “Wow. That’s me”.’

The early days were hard, Jon explained: **‘I didn’t have money to go to New York often. I went to jail once trying to go to a Bruce [Springsteen] show there for selling posters outside. I’d go to the Great Adventure Amusement Park in Jersey to see the Michael Stanley Band, all those people making little records. By the time I was sixteen, I was sneaking into bars seeing bands on the way up like U2.’**

One of Jon’s earliest endeavours was an eleven-piece sixties covers band, Atlantic City Expressway. But Jon knew that covers bands could only go so far: **‘I figured it wasn’t where it’s at. But in 1980, covers bands were making $3,000 a night, fucking huge money. I knew it was time to get out. I saw the signs, man, it’s a dead end street.**

‘You gotta find something – anything. For me it was rock ’n’ roll I could believe in as a kid and hold to with both hands. It worked for me. I never wanted to be a coulda-done-this, shoulda-done-that. If I could preach anything, I’d preach this, regardless if you want to be a writer, a singer or the president of the United States…’

When times were hard, Jon famously recorded a song called *R2D2 I Wish You A Merry Christmas* for the *Star Wars Christmas Album*. **‘Hey, I’m not embarrassed by that! I got paid $180, that was a big deal in 1980. I knew what it was to go hungry and I was trying to get my demo heard at the time.’**

When one of Jon’s demo songs, *Runaway*, became a hit on a local New Jersey station, he needed a band to help him play the song live and duly recruited four other musicians. These were: a keyboard player named David Rashbaum (David Bryan), Dave Sabo, bassist Alec John Such and drummer Tico Torres.

He told *Spin* the story in his own words: **‘When I put [the band] together it was because of the song *Runaway*, which became a hit by accident. Nobody thought it was going to do anything, but it happened without the help of a record company, or a band, or producers, or managers or nothing. I was so tired of record companies shutting the door in my face, finally I said “Fuck it, I’m going to a radio station that has nothing to lose by saying I like it or I hate it.” I played it for a DJ named Chip Hobart, who put me and Twisted Sister on this same album. He found these two bands and now the guy can’t even get a gig. He had a great ear. If it wasn’t for him, *Runaway* would have ended up in the garbage.’**

As for the band name, Jon explained, **‘We could have been called Victory, or some other weird name. But what was happening was that because *Runaway* broke, there was a song by a kid named Jon Bongiovi. And what we didn’t want to do was confuse the public, now that they’d heard this song, to say that it was by this band, because there was no band. Yet I didn’t want it to be Jon Bongiovi. They tried things on me like Johnny Lightning and the Somethings. There was a Robin Something. They knew Bongiovi was not going to make it. So finally the head of A&R said “Why don’t we just change the spelling and drop the first name and we’ll make it like a group?” It was very important to me that it was a band, and they agreed. The band was happy and I was happy too. It is a five-man band.’**

Of the recruitment of his new band, Jon later recalled, **‘I saw Tico [Torres – drums] play with a band called Lord Gunner. He replaced Vinny ‘Mad Dog’ Lopez from the early E Street Band. I was like sixteen and I was so pissed off. I couldn’t believe they kicked Vinny out of the band. I went there and saw the different drum kit and I was bummed. I thought Tico was an asshole for replacing Vinny Lopez. But once I heard him play I couldn’t believe the guy. So years later when Alec said Tico was available I said, “Really! Do you think he’d come?” I saw Richie [Sambora – guitar] open for Joe Cocker one night. He had sort**

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of a Styx-Queen-Zeppelin kind of rock band. They were trying to get something going. Alec [Such – bass] played in a cover band that I had seen a lot, Phantom's Opera. If they had had original songs they would have been bigger than Kiss, Queen, Judas Priest and everybody. They were doing Queen better than Queen. They were amazing. The lead singer was a superstar. But they had no concept of what it is to write a song. And something happened and the singer got cancer and died. That was an amazing, ridiculous band. They were making $3,000 or $4,000 a night on the Jersey bar circuit, five nights a week, doing covers. That was when the Jersey circuit was big.

'Dave [Bryan – keyboards] and I played in a couple of bands on and off. And he was going to college when I put the band together. He's Mr. Schmaltz. He played cocktail piano in a place called the Pink Elephant, playing stuff like *Feelings*. His father made him play there.'

By the time Bon Jovi took off, Jon had been a member of various bands: **'Before this I was in the Wild Ones. That was more pop-oriented. The name came from the Tom Petty song. I've always dug Petty a lot. We used to play down in Asbury on Sunday nights at a place called the Fast Lane. We didn't have bad stuff. Before that I was in the Lechers. That was a cover band. We did everything from Motown to Elvis Costello. I was about eighteen then, but I'd already done my first 10,000-seat outdoor stadium gig. I was in a band called the Rest, that both Billy Squier and Southside Johnny produced. I had a couple before that. One was a big ten-piece horn band that played all the Jukes-Springsteen stuff. Before that I had a band called Raze that was like a Kiss-BTO-Aerosmith-Stones kind of band.'**

Soon the East Coast record labels became aware of the Bon Jovi show, which featured Jon's impassioned, charismatic performances and husky, emotive vocals: a bidding war ensued and in 1983 a deal was signed with Mercury (then under the Polygram aegis). Sabo was replaced by Richie Sambora, a player whose approach didn't emulate the shred ethic of the day but which stemmed more from the blues-rock tradition.

Of his new guitarist, Jon later said, **'Richie is twenty times the guitar player I'll ever be. I play guitar as good as a songwriter, to be honest with ya. You know what I mean? Jeff Beck's got nothing to worry about with me. The truth of the matter is, what I wanted to do with the guitar was write songs, and the way I learned to play was about that. It wasn't mimicking some guy's hot solos, it was "What chord progression was that?" and "What inversion is that?" That stuff actually**

Richie Sambora onstage in 1989.
'Stand on the stage in front of fifteen people or 15,000. Have them look up to you and tell you how wonderful you are, and if you don't think that's a great feeling, okay, then you're unlike me.'
– Richie Sambora

never ends either; you never stop learning.'

Sessions for a full-length album took place, and in 1984 the eponymous *Bon Jovi* album appeared, with the re-recorded version of *Runaway* entering the US Top 40.

'The first record sold 350,000. We thought that was cool because it's as many records as the Jukes sold and we got to go around the world and go to Europe, Japan and through America. I thought that was as big as it got, I didn't fathom the concept you could make money out of this. The first day we had a tour bus, we pulled into a bar and sat there all afternoon just because we had a bus, although we still lived with our mothers. Having a hotel room, wow! What a concept!'

In 1985 it all changed for Bon Jovi. Their new album, *7800° Fahrenheit*, sold respectably – and went gold reasonably quickly – but wasn't quite the huge success the band wanted, prompting them to change their strategy for the next album.

7800° Fahrenheit came at a tough time in the band's career, recalled Jon, **'You know, what's funny is the album sold twice as many copies, but it is my least favourite album in retrospect. It was a very … not a painful time, but you know you have your whole life to write your first album? You have six weeks to write the second one. I remember going through some legal hassles with a production company that claimed we had a deal with them and wanted a piece of the band, because now all of a sudden we were touting for success. And we literally had to carry the tapes with us to and from the studio for fear of somebody stealing them! And our producer, Lance Quinn, was basically thrown out of the Power Station [studio] and our going with him to Philadelphia – the five of us sleeping together in a two-bedroom apartment. My dad would come down every couple of weeks with a big pot of spaghetti for us and some mattresses – it's like that scene in *The Godfather* where all the guys are sleeping on the floor and they're teaching them how to cook the sauce! That was our existence down there in Philadelphia in 1985 making that album. At that time, we didn't even know if we had a future. All those bands like Mötley Crüe and Ratt and Dokken were successful, but our first album hadn't exactly set the world on fire. So when *Fahrenheit* came out we thought, "This feels good. We like it!" We were very young and silly and in retrospect we didn't take our time. It could have been better, should have been better. But we were growing up.'**

For the next LP, Bon Jovi asked a professional songwriter and producer, Desmond Child, to co-write songs with them – a feat that the veteran industry composer performed with panache, penning several excellent, fists-in-the-air anthems that suited Bon Jovi's stripped-down, anthemic style perfectly.

'I liked what Bryan Adams was doing with Tina Turner. So I asked our A&R guy, "Can't I write a song for a Tina Turner and sing it with her?" He said, "It's the publisher's job to get those songs out there, and your publisher's obviously not doing that. I know a guy who has lost his record deal and is hustling songs around. If you guys write with him, perhaps something good will come of it." We thought, "Why not? We'll see what happens." Des came down to Richie's mother's basement. We wrote a song called *The Edge of a Broken Heart*. The second song we wrote was *You Give Love a Bad Name*. We demoed it and everyone liked it, but we didn't know it was a hit song. None of us had ever had a hit. Desmond had one semi-successful song with Kiss called *I Was Made for Loving You*. But we were all on the cusp. The producer Bruce Fairbairn was on the cusp. The engineer Bob Rock was on the cusp. When the pieces came together, it was bigger than life.

'Some people believe that Desmond Child is responsible for breaking Bon Jovi, but what they forget is that when we worked with him he wasn't the established songwriter that he is now. We helped him as much as he helped us.

'It was just the magic of the gods. The first record we did in New York. The second record, we went to Philadelphia with Lance Crane … For the third record, Bruce said, "Why don't you come to Vancouver?" We thought, "What the hell, what else do we have to do?" So we all moved to Vancouver to a two-bedroom apartment and did pre-production, which was something new. We started playing together as a unit and realised that Bruce was going to capture the essence of the band live. He was unbelievably anal. He would say things like, "We're going to work on bar eight tomorrow because that's not quite right yet, guys". But he gave us this feeling of purpose. He believed in us. It seemed like it was going to be something.'

Jon has recalled the change in Bon Jovi's circumstances that their next LP brought reflecting, **'I thought playing the block dance was successful. When you got a record deal you thought that was successful. When you had a gold record you thought that was successful. If it ended at any point soon, I had made fifty grand, and bought a condo in Florida sight unseen because then I'd have a roof over my head. I thought you were the Rolling Stones if you had a gold record. My only rock star friend was Aldo Nova and he had one gold album that hung above his fireplace. He had this – in my eyes – mansion on Long Island. I thought that was it. At that time though, bands had three records to make or break themselves. We knew we were either going to achieve greater success or be relegated to the theatre circuit. You were either going to be Southside Johnny or**

'Nothing is as important as passion. No matter what you want to do with your life, be passionate.' – Jon Bon Jovi

Jon Bon Jovi is seen here in 1989.

Def Leppard. I wasn't too concerned because I was twenty-four years old. But there was a great anticipation for the third record on radio, and MTV and the rock magazines. We were this great live band who just needed the opportunities.

'It was a confusing time. At our label, it was Tears for Fears, whose lyrics I wasn't relating to whatsoever. We were writing songs that made you say, "I want to sing that tomorrow at the show." Everything we were writing had to be relatable to our show. How is this going to move the crowd? What are we going to do to steal the headliner's thunder? What hook do I need? I knew a song like *Raise Your Hands* would get people involved, especially if you're the opening act. *Wanted …* wasn't so much that, because it was a place in time. *Never Say Goodbye* wasn't either, because that was about missing the high school girlfriend. But everything else had to be related to the show.

'We did what we always did – started writing. I knew I wanted to incorporate the movie element and tell stories about people I knew. Now, instead of rewriting a song like *Runaway* where the girl didn't have a name, I wanted to give names to people. I wanted to relate those stories to people I had gone to high school with. Some got married right out of high school. Some joined the service and now were working somewhere. I wanted to tell their stories because they could've been me, if I hadn't learned to play guitar.'

> *'Jersey shaped who and what I am. Growing up in Jersey gave you all the advantages of New York, but you were in its shadow.'*
>
> JON BON JOVI

Fortunately the third LP proved to be their most successful album ever – the 1986 smash hit *Slippery When Wet*. The genesis of *Slippery When Wet* is a tale worth telling, as Richie and Jon told VH-1 with great enthusiasm: **'We had just finished a nine-month world tour, getting what I thought was a mediocre record, *7800° Fahrenheit*, up to gold status. We were in debt to the record label for a couple of million bucks. We needed to pull this next album through to make sure there was going to be a Bon Jovi. It was an edgy time. We had no money. We were paying our crew more than we were making ourselves. We were living at our mom and dad's, and wrote most of the songs for *Slippery When Wet* in my mom's basement.**

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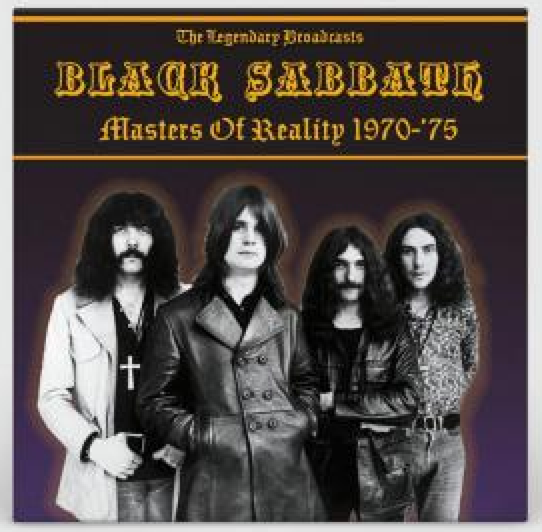
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Jon Bon Jovi on stage at Wembley Stadium on 23 June 1995.
'Throw us into any situation and we could adapt. That was an integral part of our becoming a live act.' – Jon Bon Jovi

'I was listening to the same stuff that I always listened to. I was a big fan of Led Zeppelin, Eric Clapton, Aerosmith and modern-day blues people like Albert King. I also had a steady diet of Motown like Stevie Wonder and Marvin Gaye. Jon's influences are much different than mine, but it all melded together. I think that's what made Bon Jovi's style come through. *Slippery When Wet* was a unique album because we created something that nobody was doing before. It had power and heaviness, but wasn't heavy metal. The lyrics related to people's everyday lives, too … We wrote [*Living On a Prayer*] at Desmond Child's apartment in New York. I was really late because I had a recording session the night before with a friend of mine. They were very mad at me. The beginning of that song came out of that session. I remember Jon and I were sitting in a cab. It was raining and he said, "I don't know if that song is going be on this record." I said, "Jon, that may have been the best song we've ever written." He said, "Well, maybe it could be on a soundtrack somewhere." I just looked at him and said, "That's a No. 1 song."

'[The album] was going to be called *Wanted Dead or Alive*. We went up into this remote place in the mountains outside of Vancouver called Whistler. We were shooting in this cave in this Western garb. It looked a little bit put on, and we were kind of unhappy with it. As we were driving back to the Number Five – our favourite strip club in Vancouver – our manager Doc McGhee saw this sign on the road, "SLIPPERY WHEN WET". He said something about it, but we were humming and hawing. Then we went to this club and saw this gorgeous blonde go into the shower and soap herself up. We looked at each other and went, "Slippery when wet. That's going to be it." The problem then became, what's the album cover going to be like? We shot this one beautiful girl with large breasts and a thing that said "Slippery When Wet". The censors didn't let it happen. So it was getting to the last minute and Jon and I were together in this room. The *Slippery When Wet* album cover is actually a Hefty trash can bag with water sprayed on it. We held it on both sides and Jon wrote "SLIPPERY WHEN WET". Fourteen million records later …'

Slippery When Wet remained in the US and UK album charts for months and gifted the rock-buying public three all-time classics, two of which – *You Give Love a Bad Name* and *Livin' On a Prayer* – hit the No. 1 spot. The other, *Wanted Dead or Alive* displayed that the band could do acoustic power ballads as well as any of their contemporaries.

Jon later chuckled, **'I've always been fascinated by cowboys. I'm Clint Eastwood's biggest fan, as you know! There's just something so free about the idea of roaming around wherever**

you want. It's a lot like the life of a rock band. You wander into town, do what you have to do, play your show and move on to the next town.'

Keen to capitalise on the release of *Slippery When Wet*, Bon Jovi's management made sure the young band didn't waste a moment.

'It was quick. We started touring before the record was even close to being out. I said, "Let's open for the Cars or Bryan Adams." Our manager Doc McGhee said, "No. We're going out with the Scorpions and Judas Priest. We're going out with guys that have had a whole lot of records and a fanbase that isn't fickle and they're going to learn to like you." That was like a kick in the teeth. We had to learn fast because that they were good, tight rock bands. We went from the Judas Priest tour to the .38 Special tour. Suddenly we're Bon Jovi the good old boy band! Throw us into any situation and we could adapt. That was an integral part of our becoming a live act, and now we had the songs to back it up.'

When *Slippery When Wet* went to No. 1, the band were understandably ecstatic, Jon recalled. **'*Slippery* hit No. 1 while we were in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, in 1986. We were opening for .38 Special. Doc was coming out to celebrate with us. He missed his flight, so he chartered a private plane. When he came with that plane, we left the bus right there. We all squeezed into that plane. It was elbow to elbow, but we were on a plane, man! We had a No. 1 album. Bon Jovi was selling a million records a month and it was phenomenal. .38 Special's manager said, "Maybe we'll let you be co-headliners." We went, "Great. Gotta go now. It's our time." We got on that plane, went to the next city, and told the promoter. He says, "As a gift for all the money I'm making tonight on the .38 Special tour, I'm gonna pay for that plane to take you to the next city." Now we're smart. We get to the next city and we go, "You're not gonna believe what the promoter did for us last night. He paid for us to fly to the next city." So the guy's going, "I'll pay for the plane to go to the next city." We're like, "Suckers!" From the airplanes we went on to if you did one show, you got a leather jacket. You did ten shows, it was a pool table. When you did fifteen shows, you got a 1969 red convertible Camaro. I got five pool tables, ten leather jackets and a 1969 Camaro convertible. Which, in retrospect, means our promoter made way too much money!'**

The videos for each song showed the band arriving at airports, performing on stage, making 'amusing' gestures to the camera and generally cultivating an air of unaffected hometown boys making good. The excellent decision to show the band as they genuinely seem to be (rather than utilising a high-art concept) struck a chord with every section of the American community, from housewives to headbangers and back again.

The effortless, unpretentious look of the videos came at a price, said Jon, who told reporter Glenn O'Brien: **'I hate videos. If you wanted to torture me you'd tie me down and force me to watch our first five videos. Five times you're a chump before you learn what you're doing. The first time we'd just made a record and we were all excited and some asshole decides we're going to make a video for *Runaway*. So instead of making it about what the song's about, he decides to put a concept to it with his little niece in it. It's the worst piece of shit I ever saw in my life. There's a girl with like fire coming out of her eyes. They dressed the band. Richie's wearing a jumpsuit and shoes that are three sizes too big. They kept squirting us down with this greasy solution to make it look like we were sweating. We all look like assholes.**

'The second one did well, but I hate it. The next album we did *Only Lonely*. We went with their story. It was the guy who had done the Steve Perry video, which I thought was pretty innovative. He was going through the same personal problems as I was. He hung out with us. Went out drinking with us. Then he went out and made this video for $90,000. Puts his fucking brother in it eight times; puts Richie Sambora in it once. Biggest piece of shit I ever saw.

'When this album came out we told the director if it wasn't right we'd kill him. We told Polygram if we don't want it, we're not paying for it, don't you dare come to the shooting. I told the director, "We're going to do a concert. You film it. Cut it down to three minutes." It finally captured the spirit of the band. Now people come to see us and they say, "You guys have fun!" No shit.'

Slippery When Wet sold nine million copies in the US alone, and elevated Bon Jovi to the status of international superstars almost overnight – notably in the UK. As the years passed, Jon noted the evolution of the music industry. Even in the late 1980s he was perspicacious enough to comment, **'In America, of course, there's MTV and two or three rock 'n' roll stations in every city, and those things don't exist anywhere else in the world. Now, after four years and three albums, every place has sort of equalled out. Now our audiences in Europe are pretty much half male and half female. In the States it was more female, now it's half and half. It took a while because in the beginning people didn't know what the hell Bon Jovi was. They didn't know if we were a jeans commercial or a pizza parlour. The name didn't tell you if it was a rock 'n' roll band, or a new wave band or what the fuck it was … We're a rock 'n' roll band. End of story. I don't like to categorise music … We've opened up for some pretty weird combinations. We opened up for Scandal, for both of the Winter Brothers and Greg Kihn.**

Richie Sambora during Bon Jovi's performance at Wembley Stadium.

We opened up for ZZ Top at Madison Square Garden before we even had an album out. Talk about a weird combination. When we got off the stage we realised it was the fastest set we'd ever done. I think it was seventeen minutes. But we've always been brave. Our attitude has always been "Fuck it! Let's go get it!" I always dug the idea that it was a fight.'

Wisely, Bon Jovi chose not to tamper with their simple, effective formula on the follow-up album, *New Jersey*, which showcased more of the same soft-rock material and became another huge-selling record. The crowd-pleasing qualities of *Bad Medicine* and *Lay Your Hands On Me*, plus the easy-on-the-ear stadium-rock of *Born to Be My Baby* and *Living in Sin*, made them all Top 10 singles.

By the end of 1988 Bon Jovi were one of the biggest bands on the planet, touring the world in ever-increasing circles and ever-expanding venues; the rock populace couldn't get enough of their charismatic show and infectious tunes and demand for the band was at its zenith. Unfortunately this forced the band into a gruelling schedule and Jon suffered enormously for several months.

'That first Donington festival was actually a good gig for us; you're in that great poised-to-happen slot. And then we came back and we headlined, and I was ready to die! We shouldn't have been there. I was really too physically ill. I should have enjoyed that period of my life, but I didn't get a chance because of the huge explosion of that album and that tour, and everything and our desire to just go, go, go. We were burned! I couldn't sing and we looked like death. And it wasn't just that show, it was the whole time. I was shot up with steroids and anything else they could give me to keep me working. I was a total wreck. I didn't know it at the time, but I know it now. The powers that be should have said "Fuck it, go home, go sleep for six months", and they didn't … That, in retrospect, is why we did *New Jersey* straight on the tails of *Slippery*. I was afraid that this wonderful ride would end. But you don't realise that when you're in it. It was a pretty wild time: "By the way, today you sold a million records", "Oh, that's nice". Tomorrow you sell another million. "Oh, that's nice" – it really was that crazy. You don't think it's going to last forever but you don't want it to end. Performing is like a drug.'

Thankfully, in subsequent years Bon Jovi found a healthier balance in life and (with the exception of Richie Sambora) toured as recently as 2018. A new album, *Bon Jovi: 2020*, is touted for release this year it seems there are many more years of this rock stalwart to look forward to.

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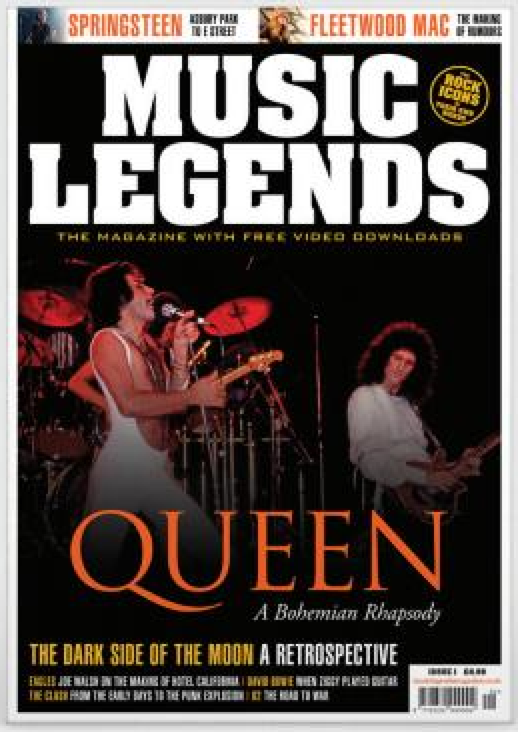
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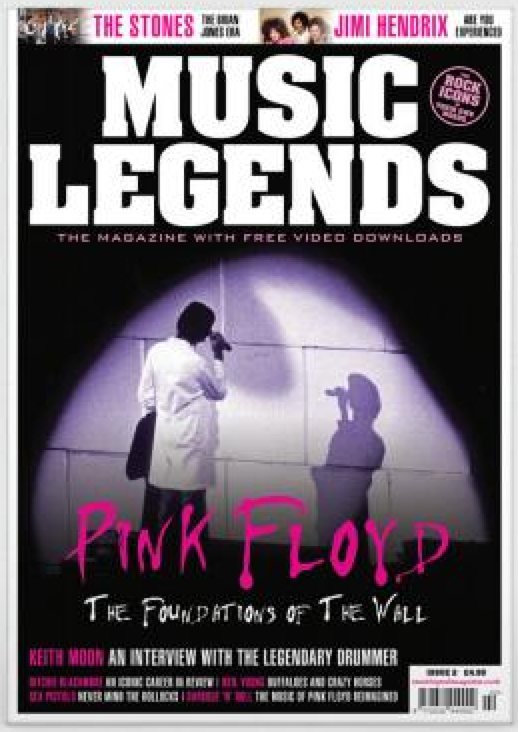
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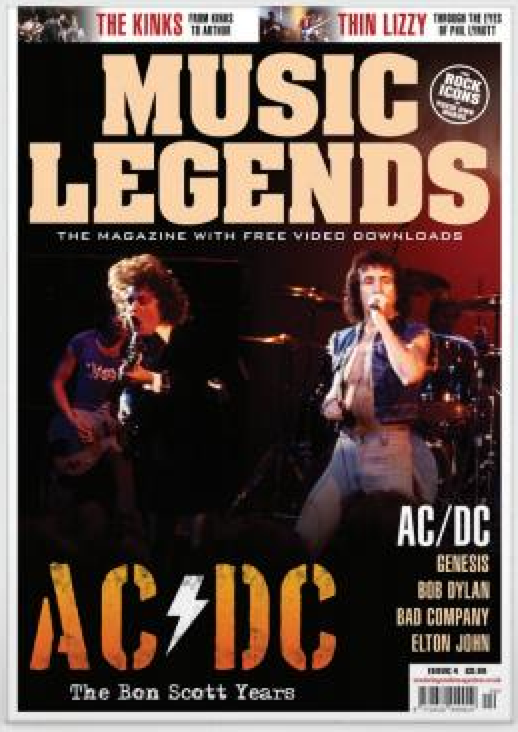
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